

# **Edmund Booth (1810-1905) forty-niner; the life story of a deaf pioneer, including portions of his autobiographical notes and gold rush diary, and selections from family letters and reminiscences**

EDMUND BOOTH FORTY-NINER

EDMUND BOOTH MARY ANN BOOTH It is believed these likenesses were made shortly after his return to Iowa after his sojourn in the California gold fields. He was then in his early forties.

EDMUND BOOTH

(1810-1905)

FORTY-NINER

The Life Story of a Deaf Pioneer

Including Portions of His Autobiographical Notes and Gold Rush Diary, and Selections from Family Letters and Reminiscences

SAN JOAQUIN PIONEER AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STOCKTON, SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

1953

(The Third Publication of the Society)

Copyright 1953

by

The San Joaquin Pioneer and Historical Society

No part of this publication may be copied, reprinted

or used in any form without express permission in

writing from the above named Society.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

“... *Hark, the world so loud, And they, the movers of the world, so still!*” —Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, in *The Souls of Books*

i

## FOREWORD

This volume recounts in brief the life story of a remarkable pioneer of America's great West—a man whose honest and dauntless spirit refused to bend to the tempests of adversity.

Totally deaf, blind in one eye, with limited use of speech, married to a deaf-mute, poor, with education formally limited (but finally thorough), he achieved considerably more than the average man not thus handicapped.

The book has been compiled from his writings plus parts of some of his and his wife's letters, a letter from his elder son, and some brief reminiscences of the son. To spotlight his account of the trip across the plains during the great California Gold Rush, large portions of his diary have been included. The account of his early and late years has been condensed from the autobiographical notes written after he was seventy-five, and from early letters.

In the text of the selections from the diary and the letters, it has been the policy to retain in many instances the archaic and irregular capitalization and abbreviations, and occasionally the punctuation and spelling of the original. This seems to give the modern reader something of the flavor and color of the style. Where the form of the original manuscript has been sacrificed, it has been done in the interest of clearness and easy intelligibility.

Appreciation is expressed to all who have helped in getting the book ready for publication: To W. F. Brewer, professor emeritus of English at Montana State College, and his wife, the late Mrs. Mabel G. Brewer, of Lodi, California, who supplied much of the manuscript. (Mrs. Brewer was the daughter of Thomas E. Booth, elder son of Edmund Booth.) To Edmund H. Booth, professor of English at Dartmouth College, who supplied most of the letters. (Professor Booth is the son of Thomas Booth's younger brother, Frank W. Booth.) To Dr. Marion F. Booth, sister of Professor Booth, who made the first typed draft of her grandfather's autobiographical notes. To Professor and Mrs. Brewer's daughters, Miss Gertrude D. Brewer and Mrs. A. C. (Helen A.) Heckenlaible, who read both typescript and proof of this volume. Also to Miss Frances Burket, onetime librarian of the San Joaquin Pioneer Museum, for valued assistance in editing.

E. R.

Stockton, California

June, 1953

iii

## CONTENTS

Chap. Page  
1. The Early Years 1  
2. Journey to California as a Gold-Seeker 7  
3. The Period Spent in California 17  
4. Letters That Passed Between Edmund Booth and His Family 23  
5. Return to His Iowa Home, and His Final Years 71

1

## CHAPTER 1

### THE EARLY YEARS

EDMUND BOOTH was a Man of the Nineteenth Century in America; so completely so, that to review his life is to touch many of the major movements that spurred the nation to develop rapidly toward its true greatness during that period.

He was born in Chicopee, Massachusetts, August 24, 1810. His father was a farmer. The family were able to trace their ancestry back to 1275 in England.

In 1815, his father died suddenly from a disease considered contagious. Three days later, Edmund was attacked by the same disease, and the sequelae took the form of total loss of sight in one eye, and partial deafness. Three years later, when he was eight years old, he lost his hearing completely, but by that time he had fortunately learned a little of reading, writing and speech. His speech-organs were normal, and his conversational powers in adult life were considered remarkable.

In his autobiographical notes, written after he had reached 75, when his diary was thought to be lost and his letters of Gold Rush days were not known to have been preserved, Booth describes how he learned to read:

“I have a dim recollection of my mother taking a straw from the broom, setting me on her lap and pointing to each letter of the alphabet and naming it. This was soon after my father's death or when I was four or five years old....Mother afterwards said she sent me to school but the teachers said they could not teach me, so she took me on her lap and taught me the one-syllable words, ba, be, bi, bo, etc. I could hear a little in the left ear at the time, and until eight years, when my hearing left me in a night.”

All of his early schooling was at home. In 1828, when Edmund Booth was 16, he entered the Hartford (Connecticut) school which was called an “asylum” and seems to have been an institution

operated by a private corporation for the education of the deaf and dumb. (It was not an insane asylum, nor were there any mental defectives there.)

Before Booth had completed his education at the “asylum,” he was asked to begin teaching classes, and this work was continued until he resigned in May, 1839.

One of his pupils was Mary Ann Walworth, 14 years old, who, years later, became his wife. She was a deaf-mute,<sup>\*</sup> who had become deaf at the age of 4, following an illness.

One of the great-grandchildren recalls hearing it said that Mary Ann Booth, when her children were small, could call them to her, though she pronounced their names imperfectly.

We turn again to Booth's autobiographical notes:

“In June of 1839 I left [the Hartford school] by the regular stage coach for Albany, New York. Traveled all night and nearly all the next day. At Albany stopped at the Eagle Tavern. An hour or two later took railroad cars for Syracuse. Arriving at Syracuse I learned I could go on by stage or by canal to Oswego on Lake Ontario. I chose the latter with a view to get sight of the renowned lake, the scene of Cooper's ‘Hawkeye.’ Reached Oswego in the morning. It was a small village....Late in the afternoon the regular steamer arrived from Kingston, Canada, and I went aboard for Lewiston, situated at the mouth of the Niagara River. In the morning we reached Lewiston, entered the river....On the American side we left the boat and climbed the steep bank. A railroad train of two or three coaches was waiting. The town was almost nothing.

“The train stopped at Niagara Falls and I gave the whole place a full inspection....In the afternoon another train was starting for Buffalo....At that time the only railroads west of New York City or Albany were from Albany to Syracuse 2 and from Lockport to Buffalo. Frink's mud wagons, as the mail stages of this western section were called, were the only sure means of conveyance.”

Five days were consumed in a pleasant lake voyage to Chicago, with brief stops at Detroit and Milwaukee.

“Chicago seemed to be but a few feet above the water. It was a straggling town, buildings of frame here and there, to the view hardly twenty buildings in all. What I took to be the abandoned Fort Dearborn stood on the declivity towards the lake shore. Entering one of the stores, saw an Indian, painted and standing motionless like a statue, stern looking and leaning against a pile of goods. Town lots were cheap, as low as \$75 each. In the afternoon took stage, one of Frink and Walker's mud wagons, for Galena on the river of that name. Reached Galena at noon, larger than Chicago, better built, regular streets and apparently far more population. Went in the Gazette newspaper office, procured a couple of papers and mailed to sister Hannah in Springfield, Mass.

“At the post office, as I delivered the papers, the two young men in attendance looked at me suspiciously, as I thought. Supposed it was perhaps some revelation of western manners. Returned to the hotel for dinner. Found the piazza filled with a crowd, all gazing at me as though they thought me an ogre. Found dinner was nearly over. Took a seat at the table. The landlord placed before me what was wanted, and I began to eat. Soon a big, burly man entered, stood by my side and spoke orally. I made the usual sign of want of hearing and went on with my dinner. By this time a crowd was standing around in front. A minute or two passed thus and then the burly looking fellow beside me (suppose he had been speaking and getting no answer) tossed a handbill by my plate. It described a murderer in Ohio and tallied almost with my appearance, tall, one eye, black hair, mine was light.

“I finished dinner and the man asked me, in writing, if I would allow my baggage to be examined. This caused me to laugh outright for it told me the suspicion was more than I had thought it. I arose, beckoned to the bully, a doctor. He followed, some of the crowd also, upstairs to my room. The landlord came in also and sat quietly as though regretting the affair. I pulled forward a couple of trunks and handed my bunch of keys to the doctor. He motioned to the trunks and I understood and laid them open, also a carpet bag. One of the trunks was full of books. Doctor did nothing, so I opened two or three and showed my name and former residences. Clothing also with my name. Also on the brass handle of my umbrella. Crowd began to thin out again, the doctor reflected a moment, jumped up and went out. The landlord then wrote that it was all the work of the post office

clerks, and asked me to pass over it as a mistake. I may add my name did not correspond with that in the handbill and that, meeting the doctor afterwards, I told him my hair was not black. His reply was 'Hair can be colored.'

"At Galena the stage wagon, carrying the mails, started, I in it with four or five other men. At dusk we reached the Mississippi opposite Dubuque, Iowa. There was a sort of shanty made of boards nailed perpendicular; open door, no windows or fire place and no sign of being inhabited. The men sent a hail across, and after a half hour a large skiff came over rowed by one man. We all entered with the mail bags, and arrived in Dubuque. We stopped at Tim Fanning's tavern. Tim was a tall, lanky, good natured Irishman. His was the only hotel in town. Being a double log cabin, that is, twice the usual length, and two stories high, it had sufficient accommodations for the travel of that day.

"The next morning, I inquired of Tim Fanning for George H. Walworth, whose acquaintance I had made in Hartford, Conn. Tim referred me to Timothy Davis, a lawyer. Found Davis in a small shanty of an office. Davis informed me that Walworth and he were partners, that the former was at the Buffalo Forks of the Wapsipinicon, forty miles out from Dubuque, and was building mills. This was a poser for the moment. My letters from the Walworths had always been dated Dubuque, and now I found they were forty miles out in the wilderness. Davis however was a shrewd and kindly man and told me he had a horse he wished to send to Walworth and that I could take it the next day. In the course of the day he came to Fanning's hotel where I was and informed me that two men would start for Iowa City next morning via the Buffalo Forks and that I could accompany them. Dubuque was then a straggling village, one or two two-story brick buildings and a few smaller of frame or logs.

"The next morning, I was at Davis' office. Two men, mounted on ponies, apparently not much larger than good sized donkeys, stopped there. Davis' boy had a horse saddled and ready. The road was only a wagon track through the grass. Alongside was a single furrow plowed and at every mile or so a mound of sod about four feet high.

“My fellow travelers: the name of one was Bartlett, a merchant in Dubuque and a man of intelligence; the other was younger and a blacksmith. They rode ponies which went at a slow trot. The horse I was on was large and took longer steps. This compelled me to walk him, and I soon fell behind a quarter or a half mile, then putting the horse to a trot came up very easily. This continued till about noon when we came to a log dwelling, stopped and got dinner. Only a woman was in the house. Paid her a half dollar each and went on two miles and reached the north fork of the Maquoketa. Here was a new frame hotel nearly finished, and another house, owned by a Kentuckyan named De Long. These and the log house where we took dinner were all the signs of civilization we had seen since leaving Dubuque that morning. The place was then, and has since borne the name of Cascade.

“It was the same all along, the wagon track through the grass, the furrow and the sod mounds on our left. Evening came and we entered a belt of timber, an indication that we were nearing a stream. I kept the horse near enough behind the others to keep them in sight by the light of the stars. After what seemed a mile through the timber, a welcome light through the open chinks of a log cabin burst into view and we knew we were near human habitation. It was Daniel Varvell's ranch, a Kentuckyan who had been a resident of Dubuque. Another man named Clark lived with him but he was not then present.

“We dismounted. Seated around the room were some fifteen or twenty men employed by the government in laying out this Military road. Supper consisted of wheat bread, fried ham and eggs, and coffee, all very acceptable. An hour or so of talk followed, and Varvell took a lantern and led the way up a ladder to the stable loft. We spread our saddle blankets on the hay, the horses feeding below, and slept the sleep of the just.

“Leaving Varvell's we forded the stream, the South Fork of the Maquoketa, the water two or three feet deep, and resumed our way south west. About noon, we passed the first broken or plowed prairie we had seen on the route of forty miles. Crossing the hill on which the Roswell Crane building now stands, we were on what has since become Anamosa. We saw a tall, heavy man coming up the road. My companions stopped and questioned him. I was some way behind as usual.



Reaching them they motioned me to turn off to the right when we came to where the road forked. We parted, they for Iowa City to attend the first sale of town lots.

“Turning my horse into the road on the right, I rode through the low bushes, and kept on, whither I could only guess. Saw on the right of the road a piece of four or five acres broken by the plow and unfenced. Further on descried a log cabin in the distance about a mile ahead. Along my left was Buffalo Creek. Nearing the cabin, I turned the horse's head to the south side but he seemed to insist going on the north. Let him have his way and stopped in front of the only door to the house.

“Nobody was around. But Emily Walworth, in the house, saw and recognized me, ran out, shook hands, then around the corner beckoning me to follow. There stood a carriage at rest and her sister Mary Ann in it, reading. The men were all lounging around at the newly raised mill. These men, seeing a horse and rider, came up to the place and I had an old friend's welcome from George, Caleb and John Denison Walworth. Reaching the end of the journey with not five dollars in pocket and seventy 4 in Mobley's Bank in Dubuque, my first object was some kind of work. Having passed my boyhood on a farm I had no fears regarding success.

“At the mills, as the place was called, on the Buffalo, now Fisherville and two miles or so from Anamosa, there were, through that summer (1839) about 18 men and the two girls already mentioned, the men engaged in building a dam and sawmill, and the girls in housework, cooking and washing. Some of them had families living ‘on the prairies,’ as the country south of the timber was called. I engaged with the owner of the place to work at 75 cents per day and board. It was regarded as pretty good wages at the time.

“Finally the sawmill and dam were finished. Once in operation, the partners and others brought logs and carried home boards. It was the only sawmill in the country.

“The log house at the mills was too limited for convenience and Col. Wood and I soon agreed to build on what is now Anamosa. A portion had been laid off, staked into lots for a town. Geo. H. Walworth, elder brother of Mary Ann Walworth (now my wife), who considered himself general manager of the company, offered a choice of lots free if we built on it. We did so, getting the

lumber at the mills and it was the first house built in Anamosa, and the first frame house in the country.

“In this house, I and Mary Ann Walworth were married on Sunday, July 26th, 1840. There were present my mother; brother Henry and wife; sister Hannah and her husband, Col. David Wood, and their two sons Danforth and William, then small boys; Gideon H. Ford, one of the mill company; John Denison Walworth and Emily, brother and sister of the bride, and John E. Joslin, the Justice who performed the ceremony. George Walworth, brother of the bride, was at Burlington attending a session of the Territorial Legislature of which he was a member. The second brother, Clark, had not courage enough to attend in his buckskin dress and left on the day previous for Iowa City with a load of lumber.

“He was not philosopher enough to know that dress, if only decent, was of small moment on the frontier, and we were emphatically on the frontier, there being no known white settlement five miles west of us. His entire suit was a deerskin coat, vest and pantaloons and all comparatively new and clean. The bride expectant had previously objected to the squire (Joslin) wearing deerskin clothes. This put it into Clark's head to run away. Joslin, however, came well dressed in store clothes, having borrowed a dress of his son, Dr. Clark Joslin. The bride borrowed a pair of pantaloons of me to give her brother Denison a decent appearance.

“According to family tradition, when the time came for the wedding ceremony the justice of the peace, who had never performed at a wedding, discovered he had no code or manual prescribing the proper ceremonial words. However, the bridegroom was ready for this emergency. He produced a newspaper in which was a full report of the then recent marriage of Queen Victoria to Prince Albert. In the report was the ceremonial form used at the royal wedding. It was agreed that a form good enough for a royal pair was good enough for the present occasion. The justice pointed out the necessary passages in the newspaper account for each to assent to, they nodded their responses, and the ceremony was duly accomplished.

“Col. Wood and I set about digging a well, went down about 30 feet and found solid rock. Dug five feet into the rock, tried to blast and failed. Gave it up. The land all around belonged to the mill company. Too rough for a farm except on the east. Concluded to get a farm near brother Henry at what was afterwards Fairview. Made a claim west of the Military road a mile south of Fairview on what was then known as Russell's place. I removed to brother Henry's and engaged in various works as befits frontier life. Bought a yoke of oxen of Ambrose Parsons for \$60. When summer came, engaged him to break ten acres for me at \$2.50 per acre and next winter I cut and split the rails and hauled them out for these ten acres. Built a log cabin south of Reed's creek, a mere brook but never dry.

“In 1840 I was elected county recorder, and twice re-elected, two years each term. In the middle of the third term the law was changed, uniting the offices of 5 Recorder and Treasurer. I was nominated for this position and declined it. I also acted as deputy postmaster at Fairview for six months. The small compensation, six dollars in six months (for people were few in those days) and the Recorder's fees enabled me to enter my 40 acres at the land office.

“When the spring of 1841 came, I bought an iron plow, cast iron, and it proved a very good thing. With this plow I sort of fitted the ground for planting corn and raised a very heavy crop. Winter came. I built an ox sled and wood was plenty, had a comfortable house and big fire in the capacious fire place. Spring succeeded and David G. Damars sold me a cast steel plow and this worked well, not requiring one-fourth the labor of the old cast iron implement.

“Henry and I had no wagon and no money to buy one. Could be obtained only in Dubuque, price \$80 or more, and I concluded to put my knowledge of carpenter's tools to use. Found a log by the roadside, 20 inches in diameter, that had been cut and removed out of the way by the men who had laid out the Military road. Borrowed a cross-cut saw, auger, and chisel. Sawed four wheels from the log, each about six inches thick. Bored a hole through each and, with the chisel, cut out the center four inches in diameter. Made axle-trees, fixed a reach that would work easy and allow turning around and, with stakes at all the corners, had a very convenient wagon for logs, wood and

so forth....By this time I had, beside the oxen, a cow or two, calves and a dozen or more hogs and, as compared with my neighbors, was pretty well satisfied.

“In the autumn of 1843 George Walworth, the father of the family, came up from Round Prairie, Bond County [Illinois], with a horse and buggy and an urgent request from the mother that Mrs. Booth, her daughter, should accompany him home for a visit. Tom was then two years old or thereabouts and I consented to let them go, though strongly doubting the advisability, as Bond County was some 300 miles away. In the winter that followed, George H. Walworth was a member of the Territorial Legislature at Iowa City. I went there in February, and the House, needing an enrollment clerk, elected me to the position. After adjournment of the legislature, I started for Bond County, and the account of the journey through Iowa to the Mississippi may be found in the quarterly publication, *The Annals of Iowa*.

“Reaching Bond County, travelling by river boat to Alton, and thence on foot to Round Prairie, I found all well....Only one dwelling in sight....It was a stupid life, almost the only relief being the weekly visit of the N.Y. Tribune to which I was a subscriber.

“After three months, helping them on the farm, and rather existing than living, I returned to Iowa, leaving Mrs. Booth and Tom to come [later], she wishing to stay, and her mother so desiring, to do spinning and weaving, a project that failed, for all except Tom were sick. Reaching Alton by wagon, I took passage on a river steamboat for Davenport. There was a stretch of fifty miles, with not a house or sign of human life to Rome, now Olin, in Jones County. A wagon road or trail through the grass, nothing more.

“Mrs. Booth...with the boy Thomas, came up the river by steamer to Dubuque and so advised me by letter. Clement Russell's son, Miles, was about to start for that place with a wagon, and I engaged a seat. Reaching Dubuque found Mrs. Booth and Tom at a Mr. Harris's, a cousin of hers. Started for home next morning and, the horses being a good team, we made the 44 miles that day. Before another winter came, I pulled down the log cabin and hauled the logs to the newly laid out town of Fairview, nearly one mile north, and in a few hours the logs were put in place and the roof of split,

unshaven shingles laid on the roof pole, fastened by other poles and no nails, as was the custom of the time. We moved in and enjoyed life about as much as is given to mortals to enjoy. In this house a girl was born, named Harriet, and died at 17 months of age. The second Harriet was also born in the same house, June 17, 1848.

“In 1848 gold was discovered in California. Of course I had the newspapers and noted the growth of the excitement throughout the country. In the winter 6 following, teams went by daily on the Military road bound for the modern Eldorado and as the spring of 1849 came I began to feel like falling in with the throng. I had grown a little tired of the round of farm life and small profits. And so, in April or May of that year, I placed my family with my brother Henry; and, with another man,<sup>\*</sup> a wagon and three yokes of oxen, started for the land of gold.”

This may have been Clough, a deaf-mute, who was his traveling companion on the trip. Throughout his life Booth was unfailingly kind to persons so afflicted.

Edmund Booth was then 38 years of age.

7

## CHAPTER 2

### JOURNEY TO CALIFORNIA AS A GOLD-SEEKER

Continuing the autobiographical notes written in Iowa by Edmund Booth, when he was 75 years of age:

“It was a long journey of nearly six months, a pleasant journey, because of the novelty all along the road, until the last 200 miles grew rather tiresome. Before reaching the Loup Fork of the Platte river three men, in our company of 60 or so, died in three days of cholera. We were in the wilderness and no means of hearing from the states. So we did not know the cholera was in the country. At the Loup Fork it fell my turn to be one of the three or four to stand guard one night, from midnight till daylight. While on guard, and it was a warm June night, I began to feel cold. A fire, for cooking, was near and I went to that now and then to warm my hands. Suspected that I had the cholera or that it was coming on. Went to the wagon and took out a box of Mandrake pills. The

cold feeling increasing, I took a half dozen, thought I might as well die of pills as of cholera. Cold still increasing, but no chill or shaking at all, increased the idea I had the cholera.

“It would not do to give up. Thought of the family at home, and by daylight had taken over 20 pills. As light came, I entered the wagon and covered up in the blankets. Still no warmth. Waked my partner and asked him to go to Capt. Compton and borrow a couple of buffalo robes. Compton came. Asked him for the buffalo robes, telling him I was cold. He looked gravely at me, went and brought a bottle of Pain Killer, nearly a pint. I took a swallow from the bottle and felt no smart or heat in the liquid. Took another and another, and drank it all and no taste, smart or heat. Returned Compton the empty bottle and lay down. From his looks I thought he judged I was done for. In a half hour or less felt like vomiting. Called for the wash basin and vomited plenty of cold water. In so doing began to grow warm and perspire and then knew I was safe. I needed heroic treatment and had it. I was the fourth of the company taken with the cholera and the only one that lived.

“At the Loup Fork of the Platte River, in what is now Nebraska, but was then a portion of the little known Indian country, our train was stopped by Indians. A dozen or more of them armed stood across the road and demanded ten dollars for the privilege of going across their country, while some two hundred others, men, women, and children, stood or moved about on the hills nearly a mile away on our right. Our captain was a West Pointer, a son of Alexander Hamilton, President Washington's Secretary of the Treasury, and directed our company, of about sixty men and three women, to get ready their arms. This done, he gave the order to start. The Indians moved and stood in line by the road as we drove by. There was no further trouble from the Indians. They seemed to have left the way clear, it was said, from fear of cholera.

“To return to the Loup Fork. In the morning, after breakfast on fried ham, beans crackers, salt pork or whatever we had, including coffee, the crossing of the streams commenced. This took all day and we camped on the opposite side for the night.

“Day after day we proceeded up the left side of the Platte, the road nearly level all the way. On one occasion a wagon axle broke and, everybody being good natured, we stopped for a day. A few of

the men took an axe and crossed the Platte, cut down a tree and brought a stick for a new axle. They told me the stream was a mile wide.

“After five hundred miles or so of this sort of moving along, we descried a small herd of buffalo in an opening in the sand hills on our right and near a mile away. A few men, and I among them, took our guns and started to get around them. Up the hills we went and became separated into groups. The group I was in looked over one of the hills and in the valley below and within rifle shot were some eight or ten cows, bulls and calves, quietly feeding. The word was that all aim at one alone, but at that 8 moment another group of men incautiously arose on another hill and stood in full view. The herd took flight up the small valleys and some of the men in pursuit.

“I had had enough of that sort of fun and, with an Englishman, turned south for camp. The route was determined by the sun. After awhile the Englishman took a course south east. I told him the river ran east and west, and by going south we should come in sight of the river and moving trains. John Bull is proverbially obstinate and he kept on his way, south east. I took the sun for my guide and was soon alone. A half hour or an hour later, the South Fork of the Platte and soon the North and the moving trains of teams and wagons were in view in the distance. As the sun sank in the western sky I came on the road, passed train after train till I came on our own.

“That evening the balance of the men came in, bringing buffalo meat on a horse that one man had the precaution to take with him. They had chased the buffalo several miles. They gave me a share of the meat. It was the first fresh meat I had seen since leaving civilization.

“We kept on till we arrived opposite Fort Laramie. It was on the Laramie creek, on a level plain and perhaps a mile from the Platte....The fort was a broad stockade with sentry boxes on the corners, a broad gateway for teams, and a large dwelling house inside for men and officers. A regiment of white men could take it with ease, but it was a pretty good defence against Indians as they were five hundred miles from the Mississippi and armed mostly with bows and arrows.

“After a night camping near Fort Laramie, with scanty feed for cattle, we started on our way. I had read Frémont's book<sup>\*</sup> and had it with me and knew what to expect. Not so with most of the men. In a few minutes the road led us into the sage brush and sand. I saw men's faces blanch at sight of the prospect before them, but Capt. Compton and others ahead kept on and the rest followed. Late in the afternoon we stopped at a small spring near the road. Here was some grass, and the animals were refreshed. Thus it continued for some days. A quantity of wood was burned for coal for the blacksmith and some wagon tires reset. In the high banks of the valley, coal was cropping out in abundance, but not good for blacksmith's use.

Apparently “Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains,” by John C. Frémont, 1843, or a later edition, containing the same report of Frémont's first expedition and also the report of his second expedition, entitled “The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, Oregon and California” (George H. Derby and Company, Buffalo, 1849).

“After a day's rest we crossed the creek on a raft left by previous teams and were on our way as before; sand and sage brush the distinctive features of the country. (Note: A mistake. We crossed the Platte, North Fork, and after that saw no more of the Platte.) After two or three days a sudden hail and rain storm came, too violent for our cattle. We hastily unhitched them and let them run into a line of timber twenty or thirty rods away. It proved to be a valley and plenty of grass in it. The storm was brief and we cooked our supper and stayed till morning. Moving on we found hail in a ravine a foot deep. Nothing worthy of notice occurred until we struck the Sweetwater River at Independence Rock. We stopped a little and I ascended the rock from its west side where it was low enough. It was a big rock and stands alone close by the Sweetwater.”

We turn now to what today exists of Edmund Booth's diary, kept during his overland journey to California. Most of the diary is written in pencil. With the passage of time the writing has become smudged and a few pages are almost entirely illegible. The first few pages have been lost. The remaining fragment runs from July 29 through October 26, 1849.

## **JOURNAL OF A TOUR TO CALIFORNIA**

**July 29.**



Fifty miles west of Independence Rock, Wyoming. We remain in camp all day. Last night drove the cattle two miles up the “Sweetwater” for the sake of grass—and this morning they were driven down some miles below the camp for the same reason. Grass is scarce at camping places; and pretty good at a distance off. Our camp is now distant from the South Pass about 50 miles. Saw some Mormons last night from the Salt Lake, came to meet their brethren from Council Bluffs.

Evening. Three teams which had parted from us some 80 miles back in a storm came in this p.m. They bring us unpleasant news—that the cattle belonging to Brophy's and Remington's companies (Cox's has been merged into Remington's) are sick and dying 50 miles back—that must be near Independence Rock—and that sickness among the people is common. I hope the story is exaggerated. Their physician (Dr. Crane of Dubuque), who has been with us for the past few days, will return to them in the morning.

We learned that the Washington City Company is on the road a mile in our rear. Saw the guide tonight. He has been with Kit Carson. James Spencer this p.m. shot an antelope and sent us a chunk. It proved excellent....The Mormons inform us of a new route along the northern shore of the Salt Lake, and that 1,000 wagons have already traveled it. We shall ascertain the facts as we go along.

### **Monday, July 30th.**

Drove 19 miles. Washington City Co. 8 miles behind. Rocky Mountains [Wind River Mountains] on the map look like mountains of salt. Much fatigued—more so than usual.

### **Tuesday, July 31.**

Drove 12 miles without stopping. Camped at 1 p.m. at the Sweetwater (3rd ford) seven miles east of the South Pass. The mountains and Table Hill are very plain to view. Drove our cattle (over 100 in number) three miles down stream for better grass.

### **Wednesday, August 1st.**

Started on at about 9 o'clock this morning, and at noon were in the South Pass—the gate of the Rocky Mountains. It is the same barren desert we had been traveling for nearly a month—no grass—nothing but sand, pebbles and wild sage. Traveled three miles further and camped at the “Pacific Springs”—the first water we met flowing into the Pacific

#### **Aug. 2nd.**

Morning very cool—frosty. Washington City Co. are to take short cut where are no roads and get through in 20 days, they say. They have a guide and also one of Frémont's men. The Boston Co. have an old hunter and do the same. Turned off from the Mormon road or roads by way of the Salt Lake and took Sublett's cutoff. Camped on the Little Sandy River, a fine stream. We are all in good spirits—fine weather—road sandy but not bad—country pretty level. Eight hundred miles from California. Shall reach it by or before the first of October. The men think in 50 days from the South Pass—or 20th of Sept.

We arrived at the Big Sandy at 10 1/2 A.M. and camped.

#### **Aug. 4th.**

Brophy and his Co. came up and camped this p.m. They have lost 4 head of cattle and have 10 more sick—caused by use of alkali water. We have avoided it—all our animals are saved and healthy. Broke up camp and started on for the Green River—western course—at 5 p.m. Stopped at dark for supper. Went on. In an hour, the Washington City Co. came up. Their mules giving out, they had abandoned their plan of crossing the country without roads. They stopped and camped but we passed on. As the sun, on the 5th, rose over the peaks of the rocky mountain behind us, we had crossed the first deep ravine and mounted the opposite plain.

We stopped along the road sides—made fires of wild sage and boiled our coffee. Nothing but a sandy desert everywhere, covered with bunches of short, stunted wild sage. We straggled down to the ford of the Green River in a most pitiable plight. Cattle feeble from starvation, thirst and

20 hours hard drawing. All sleepy and weary. The last night was rather coldish, and the men in advance kindled fires by the road with wild sage—as they went along. No. of teams about 30.

### **Sunday, Aug. 6.**

Remained in camp till noon to allow our animals rest and feed—grass very scanty—2 camps near us. Came to an affluent of Green River—rich bottom—pretty good supply of grass. Here for the first time in eight hundred miles' travel in the Indian country, we saw Indians. They appear to belong to a company of white traders and half breeds, and have the cooking utensils, and cook in white fashion 10 with abundance of flour, pork. They have a good number of fine horses. The wild ox and red steer giving out and will go off if starved much longer.

### **Monday, Aug. 7.**

Remained in camp all day to allow the animals to recruit. Some rain yesterday—just enough to wet the surface of the parched earth. Grass here plenty. Better feeding than any we have found since we left the Horseshoe or La Bonte Creek on the Platte. Five camps along the stream give the place a lively appearance. Name of the stream, an old trader says, is “Fontanelle.” He has been once to California and appears familiar with the route. Says the distance from here to Sutter's is 727 miles and that we must go by Fort Hall—not the cutoff we have been told about south of Fort Hall.

### **Tuesday, Aug. 8.**

Started at noon. Traveled about 12 miles. Some tamarack or fir trees in various places—abundance of willows. ...Drivers covered with dust. Washington City Co. 6 mi. ahead. Every of Jones Co. being too sick to travel, we are to find a place and burn coal and do iron work<sup>\*</sup> and then Bean will overtake us again.

“Iron work” consisted mainly of reshoeing the oxen and refitting the wagon wheels with iron tires.

### **Aug. 9, Wednesday.**

Today is three months since I left home. We are now about 100 miles west of the Rocky Mountains. Six hundred more to travel to be over and beyond the Sierra Nevada.

Evening. Are now camped on Thomas' Fork of the Bear River, 20 miles from the latter stream. Fish of large size, wild ducks appear plenty. Found on our arrival the Washington City Co. (mule teams). Are rejoiced at our good fortune in coming safely this route, saving at least ten days. Have all day had a range of mountains on our right but a mile off. Bear River Mountains....

#### **Thursday, Aug. 10.**

Left Thomas' Fork. Mounted a long steep hill, and traveled on a high ridge 18 miles. Country very broken. Abundance of fir, cottonwood and willow groves seen. Came to a small rushing stream running south. Washington Co. here watered, for had seen no water or good grass on the way. All went on save two teams, Knudsen and another. Was most night. Soon a strange wagon, one of three that we met here, turned bottom up into a ravine and the three stopped. All the rest went on, intent on reaching Bear River 7 miles distant. Hurried on with a rush in darkness and clouds of dust at a breakneck pace and finally stopped and camped at a small brook 3 miles from Bear. Made fires and boiled our coffee.

#### **Saturday, Aug. 11.**

Washington Co. went on before breakfast. We did the same, but some got breakfast. Arrived at Bear River in an hour and camped near a grove of willows. Six or seven camps here. As we arrived, about half of them left. Fine morning and beautiful wide valley. Bear river about four rods wide. Slow stream running north. The Wash. Co. guide all the while maintaing these streams are Thomas Fork and Bear River. It is clear enough now that he was right.

Evening. Wild duck and large fish abundant....

#### **Sun., Aug. 12.**

As we broke up camp this morning, we saw clouds of dust among the hills on our right, indicating the arrival of Emigrants and Capt. Bean and teams we had left at Fontanelle.

**Wednesday, Aug. 15th.**

Are over 5,000 feet above sea level. Warmth came with the sun. Cloudy and some rain p.m. Owing to an Indian village being near us—a mile distant—set guard over camp and animals last night for the first time since crossing the Platte at Fort Laramie. Owing to Every's sickness, traveled slowly. Camped at one p.m., distance 8 miles. Caught two fish. Water along here too shallow. On the day we struck the Bear River, we borrowed a net of the W. City Co. and caught 30 in an hour.

**Thursday, Aug. 16th.**

Today at noon stopped at the Soda Springs, a dozen at least. Several small craters among them. Ascended the “Old Crater” marked on Frémont's map. Camped on Bear river where it turns south and near the junction of the new “Emigrant's cutoff” which we shall take tomorrow. Today overtook the St. Louis Co. and the Boston Co., all with pack mules. Have a jug full of soda water and have drank near a half gallon.

11

The warm springs excited the boys most. Could not stop the hole, which is through a solid rock. After camping found service berries abundant and in our circumstances delicious. Descent to water, perpendicular.

**Friday, Aug. 17th.**

Distance 20 miles. Left the north bend of Bear River. Traveled 5 miles west when we entered the mountains. Traveled all day over mountains. Crossed a fine rushing creek at 2 p.m. Its course north. At near night crossed another. Went 2 miles further and camped on it.

**Saturday, 18.**

Cold wind from West. Had cold showers of rain yesterday p.m., felt like hail. The drivers' faces so covered with dust it was hard to say whether they were whites or Indians. At noon came to a creek-bottom 5 miles wide—long ascent and steep descent therefrom. Plenty grass all day. Distance 15 miles. At noon, an Indian, dressed much as a white, visited the camp. Had an old fashioned horse pistol of London manufacture.

### **Sunday, Aug. 19.**

Traveled until 3 o'clock afternoon when we came to a stream of good water about three feet wide. Found camped here the Boston (Mount Washington) Company. This route being the "Emigrant's Cutoff." Uncertain about our distance to the next place for water, we concluded to camp. Crossed about noon a creek—its course south. Abundance of grass. Since we left the highland bordering Thomas' Fork, we have had grass along the road in abundance and comparatively little wild sage. On this cutoff thus far, grass grows well. Every is not much better and on his account we travel slowly. But on we must—like the Wandering Jew. We are in good spirits, notwithstanding. It is Sunday and on such days my thoughts turn to the loved ones at home. Distance today 12 miles.

### **Monday, Aug. 20.**

Ice this morning. Journeyed 26 m. No water seen till about 9 o'clock at night. Road good—went through a deep gorge—descending. Drivers walking on ground higher than the wagon covers. In evening went at a rush through dust and darkness. Came to a spring—below it the stream.

### **Tuesday, Aug. 21.**

This morning I put my cattle (2 yoke) with Hebard's team. Clough preferred paddling his own canoe and cut down the wagon to a cart and went on with one yoke. The wagon not good in the wheel boxes. Distance today (since noon) 12 mi.

### **Wednesday, Aug. 22.**

Traveled 5 miles and camped near a high bluff. I lay on the ground and slept for an hour. Some of our teams then went on 4 miles further.

**Thursday, Aug. 23rd.**

Went 4 mi. along the stream. Left the stream and traveled a desert plain 13 miles. Total distance today 21 m. Learn that the Captain of the Boston Co. had taken the Ft. Hall route and had arrived. Says he learned at Ft. Hall that an express had arrived there from California with accounts that the Mexicans had taken the Bay of San Francisco (very improbable) and that, for 22 m., the grass is burnt on the Humboldt (possible). We are accustomed to walking. Says we are 130 m. from the Humboldt. Abundance of grass.

**Aug. 24.**

Rain last night and this morning. Not heavy, but enough to break up sleep. I, with three others, spread our beds on the ground. Sky for our canopy. No tent, though I have cloth enough for one. Went on this morning leaving the "Wolverene Rangers" in camp on the river....Followed Raft River westward where it comes out of the mountains, when the road crossed the river and we stopped and nooned....Tried roasted and fried muscles. Some liked them. Some did not. At 1/2 hour before sunset, camped on a small stream running south. Think we have crossed into the Great Basin again. Clough's wild ox lay down on the road and he was compelled to fall behind till it had fed. I was a mile ahead of the train. On learning the fact, I went back to help him. Found him coming on. He takes it in good part. Says he will pack on his back or on the other ox as long as it holds out. We push on too fast for our animals. Have thus far beaten all ox teams we have come in sight of, and are ahead of all the mule trains except that of St. Louis. This day I am 39 years.

**Saturday, Aug. 25.**

Traveled 17 m. Eight miles before stopping, came to "Steeple Rock," so called from several rocks rising by the roadside resembling Church steeples but far larger. Here the wild ox again gave signs of giving out and Clough packed on 12 the other, abandoning his cart; and, soon after, we met a

Mormon who gave him \$3 1/2 for the wild ox—also gave me a guide book for the remainder of the journey.

**Sunday, Aug. 26.**

Two of the animals, Compton's and Every's, went down in the road toward nightfall yesterday. Little grass here. Went on this morning 7 miles to Goose Creek...camped for the rest of the day. Good for grass but eaten short, being a general camping ground. Must stop anyhow. Cattle too tired. Road today over hills....Goose Creek is a branch of Lewis Fork of the Columbia. We are still north of the Ridge and are shut up among mountains.

**Monday, Aug. 27.**

Made 5 m., and camped up Goose Creek. Cattle want both feed and rest. One of Hibbard's boys shot a wild duck which, with bean soup, we had for supper. Distance now from Humboldt River about 100 m. Our wagons number eleven.

**Wednesday, 29.**

Went up Goose Creek 2 m., then 13 m. to "Hot Spring" in Spring Valley. Not hot nor cold.

**Thursday, Aug. 30.**

Distance 15 m. While 2 hours nooning, at grass and no water but what we found by dug wells, the Boston Co. and Brophy's Co. came up. The latter and the mules of the former are now camped 1 to 3 m. behind us. The beef cattle are driven ahead. Bought of the Boston Co. a mess of beef in exchange for crackers. Found Hamilton of Iowa City—an old acquaintance at Jewitt's—in Brophy's Co. Route today very level along the Spring Valley. Water along here in pools. Grass abundant, also willows. Today Clough sold his odd ox to a wagon from Galena.

**Friday, Aug. 31.**



Traveled about 10 miles. Two miles behind us are the hot springs—really hot. Grass and, in the latter part of the way, water plenty. Very cold last night. For fuel, we tonight used wild sage and willows.

**Sept. 1st.**

Traveled 16 m. Camped 2 miles below the head of a small stream which forms a branch of the Humboldt. Six Indians have just come into camp.

**Monday, Sept. 3rd.**

Fifteen miles. Camped on the Humboldt. Fine running stream—averages over a rod in width. Grass and willows abundant. The valley is alive with emigrants.

**Tuesday, 4th.**

Jones Co. boys camped at noon and left us going on, on account of Every's sickness. Doctor also sick with them. We are now six teams. Ten miles.

**Wednesday, Sept. 5th.**

This p.m. passed 12 Mormon teams returning to the Salt Lake from Cal. loaded with gold. They have good oxen and horses all in good condition and say they left the Bay of San Francisco on the 16 July. That provisions and gold are plenty in Cal. Weather at noon very warm—nights more mild. Valley wider, grass and willows abundant. Stream slow. Distance about 15 m. A man with pack on back stays with us tonight and goes on in morning. Travels alone.

**Friday, Sept. 7th.**

Went through the Canon—a mile or so, probably more, in length—crossing the river twice. Nooned 3 or 4 hours. Went on 3 mi. farther and camped at dusk. Five miles today. Expect tomorrow to travel 20 miles without water. Caught 3 trout in the river.

**Saturday, 8th.**

Spent the forenoon crossing hills and mountains southwesterly, when we began to descend in a long ravine. Springs and some grass in it—not enough of either for our animals. Gave them some water and went on till after dark when we struck the Humboldt again and camped, dusty and fatigued. Boiled coffee and, with what bread we had, made supper and went to bed. We suppose we are on the road from the south end of the Salt Lake....

**Sunday, 9th Sept.**

Today is 4 months since I left home. Our course is now westward again. Eight miles.

**Monday, 10th.**

Moffatt and Benj. Hebard of our team, and Miller and Clough packed on back and at noon we all started. The foot packers went ahead. We traveled 8 mi. and camped. We are now about 190 miles from the sink of the river and are getting impatient for the end of the journey.

**Tuesday, 11th Sept.**

Notices in writing are met with by the roadside, warning emigrants to look out for their animals at night. Several being stolen by the Indians. 13 We drove in ours last night and shall attend to them nightly for the remainder of the journey on this road.

**Wednesday, 12th.**

At noon today we came up with Knudsen (pronounced Camotsoon), a Norwegian from Wisconsin, who left us and drove ahead in the night on Goose Creek. He last night had all his cattle stolen by the Indians, notwithstanding they were under guard. Some of our men went with him to hunt his animals. Meanwhile we put to and went on, taking his wagon with us to the next camping. Thirteen mi.

**Thursday, 13th Sept.**

Hebard and I took Knudsen's wagon—put our oxen to it—transferred our load, most of Knudsen's provisions, etc. We went on till 2 p.m. when we camped to let the animals feed—they had poor feed last night and this morning. 11 mi. Chained or tied up our cattle last night to save them from the Indians.

**Friday, 14th.**

Rain last night with thunder and lightning. First of the kind since we were on the Platte River. By good fortune Knudsen has a tent and thus I escaped a drenching. Today 3 trains, Mo., Ark. and Independent traveled in one—over 20 wagons. I must remark that almost every train has fewer wagons than when east of the South Pass. About 15 m. Snail shells innumerable on the bottoms bordering the river.

**Saturday, 15th.**

We are now distant from the sink 124 mi.

**Sunday, Sept. 16th.**

Today we passed a large swamp or a series of swamps and sloughs. Grass tall and thick and the sloughs filled with tall reeds with which the Indians construct arrows. A road on each side of the river—passed on the right bank—several teams in camp—on the left bank teams going on. Found the bottom of the channel too miry and kept the cattle in yoke while watering. Some that went across stuck in the mud. Hebard's cows were drawn out by my black oxen. Fourteen miles.

**Monday, 17th.**

Crossed two rivers and traveled on the south bank. Owing to the difficulty of finding sufficient grass on the bottoms and among the willows, did not camp until sunset. This gives little time to the animals for their supper as we tie them as soon as dark. Set no guard. Distance, 20 mi.

### **Tuesday, 18th Sept.**

. . . Passed a road to the right which many have taken under the impression that it is Lawson's route but which we believe is only the cutoff of 14 miles to a bend in the river. Crossed the river several times today and took a cutoff on the right of about 3 miles. Monroe, the blacksmith, who had left us near 1,000 miles back, joined us this p.m. Says Old Smith has gone to winter at the Salt Lake. Every died on the 6th of Sept. Bean and Co. are 30 miles behind—Graham and Jones 50. Distance, 14 miles.

### **Wednesday, Sept. 19th.**

Passed the end of the cutoff we saw yesterday and in the p.m. passed the forks of the road—the old road. Lawson's is a new route said to lead 60 miles to the Sacramento. Not sufficiently known and no grass and water for a stretch of 49 m. Kept on the old route for these reasons. Distance, 20 miles. Are now 60 m. from the sink.

### **Th. 20th.**

Traveled 20 m. Camped on the river. River banks high and broken—like Green River in miniature. Little grass in the narrow bottoms and small willows among it. No fuel but wild sage. The old man, Young, came up this morning with his horse team. Had left us at the junction 20 m. west of the South Pass, and had gone to winter at the Salt Lake.

[Two pages of the diary at this point are so faded as to be illegible.]

I saw Hillhouse and Knudsen sitting on the ground. They, on the instant, pointed to a spring near them and the same instant I called out “Water!”—ran up and drank at least a half gallon. I never

knew what thirst was till today. Our teams went on until sunset when we struck the river, now little better than a slough. Some friendly emigrant has left a notice in writing at this place which induced us to cross the river and go three miles further, which we did by moonlight, and came to the “Big Slough,” where we camped. Today some of our men saw six Indians. I and Park saw six deer. I should remark here that this morning I took my team and put it on Park's and Thurbin's wagon (Scotchmen from Wisconsin). Two others, Hillhouse and Dugtad, mess with us.

14

### **Sunday, 23rd Sept.**

We rose as soon as light this morning to look for the cattle, knowing we were among Indians. We have not for 3 or 4 nights pastured our animals. Fortunately, they were all safe. Compton explored for grass to cut for hay, and 4 Indians came into camp while we were at breakfast. We, as usual, gave them bread, meat and coffee. One of them undertook to guide us to grass. In a half hour we came to a good running stream 2 or 3 yards wide with abundance of tall fine grass—the best I have seen on the river yet. Here we found a camp of six wagons and the famous Indian chief Truckee. He understands English enough to be understood and let us know we were already near the sink and gave directions for the route to the Truckee river. Some 20 of his tribe are among us and are the most civilized Indians I ever met. It is evident they are familiar with the whites. Saw lumps of gold among them. Cut hay and remained in camp all day to prepare the animals for the journey to the next (Truckee) river.

### **Thursday, 24 Sept.**

Instead of being on the Salmon Trout or Truckee, we are in camp on the Carson River, 91 miles from the Pass and 200 from Sutter's. This morning we broke camp and set out on what we supposed to be the Mormon road to Salmon Trout. Traveled till late in the evening in hopes of finding water. Finally we camped with none—not even wild sage for fuel, only a few small shrubs—we were in the desert. Course southerly. This day we passed the Sink. Distance we judged 25 m. Five of

Truckee's Indians accompanied us till afternoon when they returned to the mountains on the left. They were agreeable fellows.

## **25th.**

We drove a mile this morning and found several wells. One contained tolerable water which we gave our animals and used ourselves. Filled our jugs, and, half a mile further, we came to the stream south of the sink as shown on Frémont's map. It was a mere slough of very bad water and near it under a bluff was a well of good water of which we made use. Drove on all day in the desert. Course west of south. It was evident we were on the wrong road & going to Carson River. Found wells, some of alkali and some of salt. Gave our animals some of the former. Drove till near 12 at night, hoping to find better water. My red ox gave out before this time. We now came to two wagons which had sent on their teams 11 miles to the river to recruit. After a mile further, Compton returned from exploring. We tied up our animals with out feed or water, our hay being gone. We were now ten miles from the river. It was a desperate day's journey—Compton this evening lost two head of cattle.

## **26th. Sept., Wednesday.**

We were up and started before daybreak and without breakfast. We knew we must reach water before noon or half our animals would be lost, for the alkali and salt-water caused both themselves and us to be very thirsty.

After 4 miles' travel, one of our boys, Oscar, came in from the river, whither he had gone the day before and brought an India-rubber canteen of good water. Soon after this, my right gage<sup>\*</sup> ox gave out but without lying down. I unyoked, but could not make him advance one step. I left him on the road. In Gordon's team of 5 yoke, one ox after another gave out and lay down every few minutes. This with his taking them out and replacing them with the mates of others which had given out would cause amusement and laughter were it not so serious and every man expecting his own momentarily to share the same fate. One of Hebard's cows gave out last night, and was left on the

road and never brought in. When 1 1/2 m. from the river one of Huay's oxen went down. He took the two and drove them on alone to the river. Finally at about 11 o'clock in the morning we came in, leaving two wagons at 3 and 4 miles back—Gordon's and Hebard's. The cattle being driven in, they all drank greedily.

Considerable research has not discovered his meaning for this word "gage."

Found here 3 camps and thought we were on Carson river, having blundered on the wrong road. Today I carried 3 pails of water, a bundle of hay and a large bunch of willows to the gage ox. Found him 3 miles up the road. He had of his own accord walked 3 miles down. In the evening I got him in, with much trouble from his obstinacy, until when within 1/4 mile of the river he smelled water and came with a quick pace. The quantity he drank caused me some uneasiness. He went across and 15 in 1/2 hour another was brought in a worse condition and drank in the same way. We have for near a week had fine moonlight nights. Thus we are through the desert, having traveled over 50 miles—the men say 60—and the most dangerous part of the journey. Much of the desert is encrusted with salt and alkali. Mirage is common and the illusion complete. All day men have passed up and down the road carrying water to such animals as have given out and to sick men, left to guard the wagons behind.

### **Thursday, 27th Sept.**

Learning last evening that the red steer was coming down the road, I this A.M. went up to look for him, met over 100 mules (loose) and two mule wagons. Coming down a few miles farther, met the wagons standing in and by the road. It was the "Pioneer Line" of passenger wagons, which on the Humboldt was eleven days ahead of us. They say we are 65 miles from the Pass, 175 from Sutter's, and that we are on the right road (the Mormon). Found the red steer tied to a wagon eleven miles up the desert. Drove him 3 m., when he lay down and would not rise. Left him there and returned to camp in the evening.

The road up and across the desert is strewn with carcasses of oxen, horses, mules and abandoned wagons almost numberless.

**Friday, Sept. 28th.**

This morning learned that the red steer had come down to within 4 miles of the river. Hope he will come in eventually. A man was killed on this desert last night by the Indians. Had 4 balls in him. Another had been killed in the same way about ten days ago by 10 balls. At noon we started and went 4 miles. We are reduced to 3 wagons (Compton's and the two Scotch wagons; my team is on one of the latter).

**Saturday, 29.**

Traveled today 20 miles. Road in the p.m. rough and stoney—led us away from the river which we did not reach again till about 8 p.m.—abundance of pine and green grass on this river. River 2 or 3 rods wide—fine rapid stream.

**Sunday, 30 Sept.**

Traveled 3 mi., and camped to recruit further. We have 9 m. of very heavy sand before us. We judge we are between 40 and 50 m. from the mountain top and that we shall be at its foot on Wednesday next.

After writing the above we concluded to travel the 9 m. in the cool of the evening. So started just as the sun had set. Took the left hand or river road to avoid a desert of 25 miles. Arrived at the river again and camped at midnight. Several teams passed soon afterwards. Distance today, 12 mi.

**Oct. 1st.**

Crossed Carson river and traveled on its right bank till sunset when we camped. We are now in something of a gorge and are hemmed in on all sides by mountains. This morning the atmosphere was clear of haze and we saw the snowy peaks of the Sierra Nevada before us. Yesterday 25 Mormons passed on their way home to the Salt Lake. Nights growing cold and shows we are ascending to higher regions. Fourteen miles.



**Oct. 2nd, Tuesday.**

While waiting for our teams to come up, a company of pack mules came along from Tennessee. Indians on the mountains, as we saw from the smoke of their fire. Fourteen miles. By Mormon guide book we are still 36 miles from the top of the Sierra Nevada, where we shall cross.

**Wednesday, Oct. 3.**

Route this a.m. rough, stoney and ascending. Went 10 miles in desert, then struck the river at 3 p.m., took dinner and went on. Traveled till 10; 20 miles. We are in doubt whether the Mormon guide book refers to this river or not. Shall put no more faith in it. We are warned as we go along by cards left by the roadside, to look out for Indians killing cattle. Tonight we let ours feed in yoke 2 hours, then unyoked and tied them to the wagon.

**Thursday, Oct. 4th.**

Saw snow this morning on the mountains 1/2 mile distant. Traveled along the north edge of a broad valley all day—grass rich and abundant. In starting this morning we crossed the stream that comes in from the north. By the distance of this from the Pass as shown on the map, we were in a straight line 1/2 a degree from it. At noon, came opposite where the mountains were covered with fine trees. It was a pleasure to see again trees that look like civilization. In p.m. passed warm springs. The road itself, being close by, had a feeling of warmth from the same cause. Our camp tonight is near a slough of good water....Distance, 15 miles.

16

**Friday, Oct. 5th.**

This morning saw a large body of steam rising from the hot springs a mile behind us. The Pioneer train last night came up and camped near us. They say we are on the right road but that the Mormons misnamed the river. The stream we are now on is Pass Creek, a branch of Carson. Huge pine trees, some 5 feet in diameter, are numerous and also pine nuts, good food. Coldish day. Fires

comfortable at noon. Freezing at night. We are still among mountains. Highest peaks of the Sierra Nevada, snow capped, shoot into the sky before us and apparently but a few miles distant. Traveled today 14 miles.

### **Saturday, Oct. 6th.**

Found that our camp last night was in the mouth of a canon five miles long. Went in it today 3 miles and, owing to the Pioneer train (mules) of passenger and baggage wagons making but slow progress among the rocks and over hills, we at noon sent our animals through to feed. At night Compton, Hillhouse and myself went and relieved guard over them. Feed being scarce, they were too restless. We let them go therefore till dawn when after near 1 1/2 hours' hunt, we collected and drove them into the canon to the wagons....

### **Sunday, 7th.**

Finished the canon and at night came to a small lake where we camped. Cold night and snow on the mountains near by.

### **Monday, Oct. 8th.**

This morning, mounted a range of mountains (part of the Sierra Nevada). Bad road and hard drawing—doubled teams, and, as before, were much detained by the mule train. Early in the p.m. arrived at the “Red Lake,” as the Mormons call it, and foot of the dividing ridge....We are now preparing dinner and may stay here till tomorrow. Saw today and yesterday large pine, hemlock, spruce and fir trees. One fir tree six feet diameter. Threatening snow tonight.

### **Tuesday, 9th.**

Today crossed the main ridge and drove about 5 miles west of it.

### **Wednesday, 10th.**

Snow in camp this morning, one inch deep. Drove about 12 mi.

**Thursday, 11th.**

Snow this morning. Two inches deep in camp. Learned today by some pack mules that came up that snow on the Pass is 4 inches deep and 25 wagons detained. Among them is Gordon's. Eleven mi.

**Friday, 12th.**

Passed a drove of about 50 oxen and 20 mules under care of a Govt. officer on their way to aid the emigrants who are east of the mountains, stopped by the snow. Distance today 16 miles. Grass scarce since crossing the mountains. Tonight cut down oak trees for the animals to feed on the leaves.

**Saturday, 13th.**

To give our animals (they are much worn and fatigued) feed and rest, we remain in camp for the day. Our distance from the Pass is, by the guide book, 49 miles. Our tired animals travel but slowly....My small gage ox gave out day before yesterday and is left 16 miles back. I have but two head left. We are now, by the guide book, distant from "Pleasant Valley," the first gold mines, 12 miles; and from there to Sutter's 55. The day, as yesterday, is very mild and pleasant, the ground dry and no snow. Air hazy, which prevents our seeing the mountains.

We shall rejoice to be through, although the soldiers whom we met yesterday do not give so pleasant an account of things in California as did the Mormons in the Great Basin. We have heard nothing from the world at large since we left the Missouri.

**Sunday, 14th.**

Tonight we camped near a party of Soldiers, with wagon and pack mules, on their way to assist the emigrants who may be overtaken by the snow. The place is "Pleasant Valley."

**Monday, 15th.**

Went up the valley 8 miles and came to Weaversville—a village of a few log cabins just built, and many tents. It was pleasant to see civilization again after so long a journey over desert and desolation.

**Tuesday, 16th Oct.**

We have concluded to remain, and now commences our life in the mines. We are distant from Sutter's 50 miles.

**23rd Oct.**

Left Weaversville (or Ringold) for Sutter's.

**25th.**

Arrived at Sacramento City.

**26th.**

Left for Redding's Dry Diggings, 200 miles above, on the west side of the Sacramento.

[The diary ends at this point. He has reached California, and now starts toward the gold-mining areas.]

17

**CHAPTER 3****THE PERIOD SPENT IN CALIFORNIA**

Let us return to the pages of Edmund Booth's reminiscences, begun in his seventy-fifth year:

“We, that is, I and party of three or four who crossed the plains with me, reached Sacramento City towards dusk. Just on the outskirts of the city of scattered tents and a few shanties we were about to pass a large sycamore tree when we saw camped under it a middle-aged man and his wife, also a young man; all three had been with us on the long journey. Here we stopped for the night. I asked the woman how she liked the journey. ‘Oh, it was hard,’ she said, and looked it.

“The rainy season had not commenced but November was close at hand. We prepared our supper in the usual way, talked all evening, spread our blankets on the ground and slept soundly till morning. Morning came and, after breakfast, I went for the post office. It was in a board shanty, found it after some inquiry, and asked the postmaster for letters. I stood by his side, as he sorted them, and grabbed at one letter with the name of Booth. I had written my name as E. Booth. The postmaster held it back and showed it had a different given name. I was greatly disappointed of course. Five months from home, after a journey across deserts and through uncertainties of a route unknown, save by Frémont's book of explorations only a very few years before; and wife and Tom, seven years old, and Hattie [Harriet], the baby of one year, all left behind. I had requested wife to write me once or twice and direct to Sacramento City. I now wrote my first letter [from California] to her and mailed it. Knew I would have no answer for at least two months or more as the mail steamers made only monthly trips.

“What to do was the question. The young man with we engaged to drive a mule team. . . up the Sacramento River about 150 miles to the diggings, and I agreed to accompany him. We started and the rainy season set in two or three days later. The rain was not heavy and we kept on, sleeping at night in a tent we carried. Rain every day, but light. After a week or so we camped as usual. The mules were let loose on a small island in the river. Heavy rain that night. Island covered with water and morning found the mules gone. The jig was up. Owner of teams went for help or to look for mules.

“I do not know the result, but turned about and started south. Had seen many teams going south every day. Kept on the road till nearly night. Then turned off to the left for a range of forest. Knew there was a road, that would lead me to a couple of adobe houses, and beyond that a few miles

was the town of Frémont....It was cloudy and slightly rainy. Started to cross the timber. After a half hour or so found myself where I entered. Ran my eyes among the trees and tree tops and tried again. Ended as before. No use. No compass. Growing dusk. Took off carpet bag and blanket, ate my supper of hard bread, or crackers, wrapped up with carpet sack for pillow, laid butcher knife by side and slept soundly in the light rain till broad daylight. It was the first days of November and the Sierra Nevada range along the east was covered with snow, that is, on the summits. All was still. Rain had stopped. Went to the edge of the timber to take a survey. Down the timber, over a half mile, saw smoke....Set out for that sign of civilization. It proved to be a small encampment, for the night, of a wagon team and three or four men that had been coming south, like myself, the day before. They had kept on the road from which I turned off. Their wet blankets were hanging before the fire to dry and I followed their example, ate my breakfast of hardtack and soon was at ease among them.

“I must here remark that in all my California life I found the men good-natured, civil, and kindly. We were all much alike. All away from home and all knew it. Of 18 California women, I can say nothing for I don't think I saw a half dozen save a few foreigners and as many Indian women, perhaps. These few Indian women were, as Frémont described them, the most ill-favored looking women I ever saw, and were rarely seen anywhere. The men were common enough but not numerous. How or where they lived I never knew. Their dress was usually a shirt or shirt and pants.

After drying my blankets, I and another man packed up. The team had dried over night and gone on. The man was from Boston, Mass., had been well educated, was intelligent and good-natured. I mentioned that 80,000 had come over the plains that summer. His reply was instant: ‘I pity the poor devils.’

“By this time I had learned that gold digging was, with many, a matter of chance. He and I together took our way...and we reached the two adobe houses on the bank of the Sacramento. As Frémont [the town] was some miles away, I concluded to stop for the night. The young man went on. I had no fear of Indians as Frémont had stated the California Indians were tame. The door of one of the adobe houses being open I entered, made the salutation sign to the four men sitting around the fire

and signified a wish to stop over night. They, Indians, readily assented, and I took a seat, drew out of the bag a few hardtacks, offered one to each. They accepted and gave me the leg of a deer they had roasted and were eating. Soon all but one left.

“While my sack was open I took out a small bag of pills I had bought of Dr. Sales but never used. The Indian understood the use of pills and at once put out his hand for some of them. I gave him a dozen or more having no idea of ever putting them to use on myself. After some talk by signs, he motioned me to sleep on the floor, hard earth, and left for the other house. Morning came. Ate my breakfast and went out. In a few seconds, a dozen or so Indian men and boys, entirely naked, emerged from the other house, and in single file ran to the river, a few rods away. I followed, anxious to see what it all meant. They took a long net from a pole and strung out in line, plunged into the river, swam around and brought in a lot of trout. I shouldered my baggage and resumed my way to the town of Frémont. I had seen one phase of Indian life in California. On this day I passed a herd of wild deer and thought there must be a hundred. Had seen Indians gather grass for food, as told by Frémont, and one on an oak tree shaking off acorns for same purpose.

“I reached the town of Frémont after a walk of two or three hours. It was a town of a few shanties and tents, a boarding house, a couple of stores where was a limited supply of groceries and eatables brought from around the Horn, that is, the Atlantic ports such as New York, Boston, etc. Here, I met a man from Jackson County who was with me on the long journey across the plains. He asked me to make his tent my home, and a third companion, a doctor, lived with us. We were all sociable and had some enjoyment in our strange mode of life. The Sacramento River, on the banks of which the town was situated, was very high. In fact it was brim full and a levee, a foot high, was hastily constructed to keep the water out. In two days there was a fall and no further danger. Here the scurvy broke out on my legs from so many months living on salt provisions. Among the provisions sold, I saw a bunch of sourkraut and ate it ravenously, a butter-plateful heaped up at a time, paying a shilling (12 1/2 cents), for the luxury. The water in the river was too high for work, that is, the rivers above, and I stayed in Frémont a couple of weeks. At a distance, a mile or so, was growing

timber. I got an axe and cut a few cords that I sold to a business man at four dollars a cord, he to do all the hauling.

“A stern-wheel steamboat ran daily from Sacramento to Marysville, at the mouth of Feather River, filled with miners, coming or going. It always stopped at Frémont and always had a newspaper agent on board who sold New York papers two or four weeks old, each paper selling for twenty-five cents. By this means I was able to learn of the principal events east and in the world at large. Of course, only the most important events were given in the papers, for the New York Tribune, Herald and one or two other papers printed special editions for the California market and these came at first once a month, for only one steamer then left New York monthly. The 19 papers had not then grown beyond four pages to an issue, nor did they enlarge during my residence in the land of gold. Frémont contained less than a hundred inhabitants.

“While living in the tent and sleeping on the ground, of course in my blankets, amid the general dampness, I found trouble, soreness in the lungs. At once I applied to a man who, with his wife, kept a boarding house and was admitted. They were from Illinois and had with them a deaf-mute daughter eight or ten years of age. This was the only girl I ever saw in California. I told them to go back to Illinois and place her in the school at Jacksonville and they thought they would. The man and wife were a kindly couple. At my request, I desiring nothing more, the woman made me a cup of coffee and I sat on the floor in my blankets by the stove all night. Better in the morning and after that had a bed and took my meals with the family. In a week, the man sickened and died. The woman broke up housekeeping and I never knew what became of them after that.

“I was growing impatient to be in the mines and trying my luck with the general multitude. The water had fallen enough for men to work in the river banks. I found kindly friends all along. And just as I had concluded to take the next steamer for Marysville, a friend informed me of a row boat going up and asked me to help row, and go free. (Note: The boat was a row boat for four oars and had a sail. Wind was light and the sail used when enough wind. As night approached the wind became too heavy for safety. Went ashore and waited a few hours. Wind went down and we went



on.) Reached Marysville next day. Shouldered my pack, carpet sack and blankets, and, with a half dozen men, started on foot up the banks of Feather River.

“We reached the mines on Feather River and looked around a few minutes. Engaged to work for a couple of men from New Jersey. Good men, ambitious, intelligent. The work was on the river bottom or flat and but two feet above the water. One of the men worked the rocker and the rest of us, three or four, dug and wheeled the dirt to the rocker while one worked the pump to wash the dirt. A spout carried the water about two rods to the rocker. When the day closed we went to supper. The two owners had built a shanty and kept a cook. We lived comfortably, each man receiving eight dollars a day and free board. The joke was, we received the pay of a congressman and paid out nothing for board and lodgings.

“Here I stayed two or three weeks. Then the claim gave out. Did not pay expenses of working and the two owners gave up the work. I had over a hundred dollars in gold dust in my pocket and concluded to go to Sacramento City for letters from home. February and not a word from home since I left there in May.

“So I started for Marysville. Went alone and on foot, pack on back as usual. It was but a few hours' walk. On the way met a team of two or three yoke of oxen and wagon going up to the mines. As I was about to pass I noticed the driver looking at my face and over my dress curiously as if in doubt. Then he held out his hand. It was Clark of Monticello [Iowa] who had been with me on the long journey across the plains. We talked a few minutes and went on.

“I reached Marysville. Learned that a man wanted hands to row a boat to Sacramento City. He proposed and I accepted. In all we were eight or ten men. Started in the morning. At noon landed at a wayside inn. All got dinner, paying a half dollar each, and went on. Reached Sacramento City in the evening. Dark and no wharf. Bank high. One crawled up, took the end of an oar, [and] the men, one by one, took the other end and pulled themselves up. No lights save from the windows of the few shanties scattered along the streets. The city had been overflowed worse than Frémont and the only sidewalks were a few flat-bottom boats, bottoms up. Over these we picked our way and

finally found a sort of hotel and put up for the night, every man sleeping in his own blanket, if he had one. The weather was that of May at home. In the morning I hunted up the post office the first thing. Found a letter<sup>\*</sup> from wife and read it eagerly. Learned that all were well at home and was tolerably satisfied....Later the man who owned the boat met me and offered free passage if I would help 20 him up the river again. I declined, thought I would strike out for myself at some of the southern mines on the American or other river, as I learned much of these. Then rain commenced and I waited two days. It was a California rain, not so heavy as steady and continuous. The Sierra Nevadas were a long north and south line of white against the eastern sky. It was snow as always from November till May, and the valleys below green and everything growing as in summer in the eastern states, but, as yet, I had found nothing eatable growing except grapes and these only along the banks of the Sacramento in spots.

For this letter see pages 25-26.

“For a day or two it rained in Sacramento and I waited. Board was two dollars a day at a very ordinary hotel, board good and every man sleeping in his own blankets on the floor or on benches. At the leading hotels, board and lodgings were two ounces (of gold dust) a week and this was the case there and in San Francisco during the four years of my stay. Finally the rain ceased and, with a man from New York—Long Island—I started for Coloma where gold was first discovered. It was 60 miles distant. As night came we stopped at a big log still burning, left by previous campers, ate our supper of crackers, lay down in blankets and slept undisturbed.

“Morning came and we breakfasted and went on. Stopped at the only house, a shanty, on the whole road from Sacramento to the mines, 60 miles. Going in, for we saw it was a house of entertainment, I was surprised to find the owners were the father and mother of the couple I had met under the big sycamore tree on first reaching Sacramento about the first of November. The two appeared to be between 50 and 60 years of age. The man looked somewhat cross and churlish as he did all along the route, and his wife hardly better. I asked her how she liked California. She gave me a vehement and decided “No,” while the old man shook his head and looked savage. It was the third woman I had seen in California and I did not see more than two or three American women afterwards. It was

a state of men—no women or children and no home life save [in] the miners' cabins scattered here and there for miles among the foothills of the Sierras.

“On the second day we reached Coloma, put up at the only hotel in the place, two-story, kept by a big-hearted Missouri man who had left his wife behind and come for gold. At a little distance stood the skeleton of the Sutter Mill and below it the race in which Marshall discovered the gold that brought about the settlement of California. A flat spread out on one side, many acres. On this many men were working with pick, shovel and rocker. The Long Island man had brought, or bought, a sheet iron rocker, and the next day the landlord joined us and we three went to work on the flat. We made a few dollars a day, two or five. It was unsatisfactory, and after a week or so we agreed to go over to Placerville, originally called “Hangtown.”

“So one morning the Long Islander shouldered his rocker and I my baggage, and after a walk of a few miles we were in Placerville, a straggling village of log cabins....[He] and I stayed and for two or three weeks we worked with varying success, [making] from two or three to ten dollars. We were new to the business, and long toms and sluices had not come into use. Washing gold by the rocker was slow work. We boarded at the only hotel in the place at \$18 a week and slept in our cabin. My companion was an intelligent and genial man. I grew tired of this slow success and concluded to go farther south to Sonora, in Tuolumne County, 60 miles east of Stockton.

“Left for Stockton. No way of going save on foot, and the way generally level. Packed blanket and carpet bag, suspended from shoulders. First day out met two Chinamen going the same way. They carried their baggage, pot, kettle, etc., suspended from the ends of poles resting on their shoulders. We all three walked leisurely along. At night came to an open shanty, a sort of stopping place for goods, lumber and teams and no owner visible, but a team had come in. The driver appeared intelligent and good natured. I ate my supper. The Chinese cooked and ate theirs, making tea. Lay down and slept in perfect security....

“Went on. No buildings and met nobody till reaching Stockton late in afternoon. Small city. Bought some crackers and went out a mile or so. It was a city like 21 Sacramento, of a few scattering

shanties and big and little tents. We camped under a sycamore tree. Took supper. The Chinese offered me tea and boiled rice. Took the tea, but one taste of the rice was enough. They had cooked it in lard. Shouldered up and started on. I had told them I was going to Sonora and they said by signs, 'We too.' I walked at my usual natural gait, and they at theirs. I invariably passed far ahead, stopped and waited for them to come up. On reaching me they both told me in urgent signs to not go ahead but to keep by them. I inferred they were afraid of being attacked and robbed, for we passed now and then a traveller or team coming from the mines.

"On one occasion I met a Mexican. Kept an open eye on him as he was about to pass. He stopped suddenly and spoke. I made the sign of not being able to hear. He understood and pointed to his open mouth, meaning he wanted food. I swung around my pack, took out three or four big square crackers and gave him. He looked hungry. As he took the crackers he made the sign of the cross, pointed slightly upward and then to me. I interpreted it to mean, 'The Holy Virgin bless you.' It was rather a pleasant adventure and I sat down to see what he would do on meeting my Chinese friends. He passed them with no sign. When they came up they scolded me in their way for going so fast. It was evident they regarded me as a protection to them. The next day we reached Sonora, and I lost track of them that night.

"I found Sonora a town of a few hundred miners, living in shanties along a single street and these mostly used as store buildings. A few log or slab shanties here and there, an adobe or two and a large brick dwelling, the residence of a doctor and his family. Two large gulches were being worked, with plenty of room for more men....While looking around among abandoned diggings on vacant ground, I picked up a lump of gold that the rain had uncovered, perhaps worth a dollar....This was encouraging and I set to work. Worked there and at points around for a year or more. Success was various. Sometimes five dollars a day. Sometimes ten. Occasionally twenty or more. Then sometimes nothing, much time being given to 'stripping,' that is, uncovering the pay dirt and often wanting water to carry the work on. No rain from May to November.

"At one time I and two partners, a Chilean and a Norwegian, dug down to the depth of twenty feet, pay dirt all the way. Hired a Frenchman who had a cart and mule to carry the dirt to a stream of

water a half mile away and it paid very well. At another time I worked alone. Piled up dirt and hired the same man to haul it to water and found it profitable. This did not last. Thought I would try a place called 'Yankee Hill,' where water was brought by a ditch several miles. Went in with a bank clerk from Providence, R. I., a briefless lawyer from Canada and a Frenchman. We worked for months together, paying the water company three dollars a day for use of water.

"A year or so passed pleasantly and profitably, my only anxiety being about home. On first reaching Sonora, I asked the express agent to look for letters for me at the Sacramento post office. He replied, 'The Sacramento postmaster is a poor fool and will deliver no letters save to the person addressed.' This would require some 150 miles travel and I concluded to wait till home letters came to Sonora. That postmaster was soon reformed out.

"In Sonora, and the various localities around, I stayed about four years. At first I used the rocker, and as the rainy season came on the rocker was discarded for the "long tom" or the sluice as more expeditious in work. After my first year in California I had no more to do with rockers. After the first summer and winter here, men organized companies of a few each and dug ditches, miles in length, from the river up the mountains, and brought water to the many diggings below. For the use of this water each "long tom"—that is, the men working it—paid the water company three dollars a day.

"In the summer or dry season the mines could be worked only where water was in streams or where water was brought through the ditches. Hence the dry season stopped work on many good claims, as they were called. For a large part of this four years, I worked near Sonora, in Sullivan's Gulch, and for a year or more 22 at 'Yankee Hill' some miles north of Sonora. Also at 'Camp Seco' some two or three miles south of Sonora. The warm days of June melted the snow on the mountains and brought floods and inconveniences to the miners in the river beds.

"Board at ordinary hotels in the mines was \$13 and \$9 per week and bunks furnished, or not, just as it happened, and every man bringing his own blankets. During my first summer, I lay down on the bare ground at night wrapped in my blanket."

**CHAPTER 4****LETTERS THAT PASSED BETWEEN EDMUND BOOTH AND HIS FAMILY**

We turn now to a bundle of letters that have been preserved for more than a century, letters that passed between Edmund Booth in California and his wife, Mary Ann, and eldest son, Thomas, who remained reluctantly behind in Iowa.

The reader will find that Edmund Booth's letters picture the rugged, despairing and unsettled life of the gold-seekers, their eager hopes, their great disappointments. Mary Ann Booth's letters, he will find, record graphically the state of mind of those left behind when the big covered wagons, bound for California's gold mines, rolled daily past their doors. Her letters clearly reveal the deep stirrings in the breasts of those left behind, and prove adequately that those left at home, as well as those who took the great journey, had to screw their courage to the sticking point. The reader should remember that Mary Ann had been a deaf mute since childhood, and that her husband had been totally deaf since the age of 8 and had the use of but one eye.

Following is an extract from the first letter Edmund Booth wrote to his wife after the start of the long journey:

**About twenty miles west of Iowa City Tuesday, May 15-49**

Dear Mary Ann:

You see where I am. We are now camped on the prairies with our faces westward, the sun an hour high and shining into the wagon on me as I am writing. Behind is a brook and three teams for California from Bellevue, Jackson County, owned by young men with their wives, just married—fine looking young men. We are (in our company) four teams—one of them we met at the Cedar River and [that] was the one that passed through Fairview two or three days before I started, and has two cows.

They are now churning for butter and do that every night.... We have as much buttermilk as we wish; and every morning we have milk for our coffee; and have had butter daily.... This team is owned by a Mr. Wm. Smith (an old man of somewhere about 70 but hearty and joyous as a boy), and his son-in-law and family.

We are now near sixty miles from home, and have been on the road a week. Traveled today about fifteen miles. You will be surprised to know that we have gone so short a distance in so long a time. The reason is bad roads, bad weather, and desire that the cattle feed well now that the grass has just become plenty enough.

As the distance is so short, I will give some description of the journey, for it will be impossible for me to do so in detail in future letters. We left, I believe, on Wednesday.

After Henry returned we kept on for a mile and got fixed in a mud hole. Had such a thing happened today I should have got out without difficulty and without unloading but the cattle were not then used to the work. As it was, we could not release the wagon, though we unloaded it. We let the animals feed for about three hours when I took them to "Gilbert's" and chained them for the night, I lodging at that place, while Clough remained in the wagon. I returned in the morning, and in two hours the Dubuque teams arrived and put on their cattle and drew the wagon out of the mud.

We arrived at the Cedar [River] that night and camped. Next morning began to cross over but the rain delayed us and we did not all get over before night. Camped south of the Cedar, on an island formed by a slough full of running water. Here my steers, when we were at a distance, committed an unexpected freak by entering the boat—pulling the wild cattle with them, and jumping into the river. They were 24 seen to enter the boat and I was called. I arrived as they took the leap, and I leaped at the same moment. The wild oxen refused to go and drew back. This, by drawing on the chain, turned the steers' heads up stream and towards the boat. I swam towards their heads, telling the man to unchain them. He threw off the chain, and I took hold of the bow of the white steer and turned them round towards shore for they were trying to get on board again, having both put their

heads on board and struggling to mount it. They and I swam ashore together. The only effect of the accident to me was that I was soaked up to the shoulders....

I forgot to say that before we arrived at the Cedar we passed through a mudhole that required all our cattle (nine yoke) to haul each wagon through. We left the Cedar on Saturday morning and traveled about five miles when it began to rain. We stopped at a good camping place, and, seeing no prospect of an abatement, very soon for the first time I unyoked our oxen. Compton, who has excellent judgment under some queerness of manner, attached a rope to the wild ox's head, and unyoked him. Next morning, put the wild oxen in yoke with very little difficulty.

In the afternoon, we arrived at the City.\* Obtained all we wanted at Powell's and adjoining stores and crossed the Iowa River and camped about a mile from the City.

Iowa City.

Next morning—Monday—traveled a mile or so and came on a very steep hill. A good stout rope was produced and attached to the hind axletree of a wagon—both hind wheels locked—all but the wheel cattle taken off—the rope passed once round a tree at the top of the hill and men holding on to it. Thus each wagon was let down the hill which seemed almost perpendicular.

A few rods further and another snarl. The bridge across Clear Creek had been carried off and lay high and dry on the shore. The water was some eight feet deep and unusually high. We went to work—made a float of four logs and a few plank from the bridge. On this we ferried (by means of a rope held by men on each side) our baggage, provisions, and, finally, empty wagons. All was over soon after sunset. Nothing lost. We reloaded and camped. We had swum the animals over and as usual left them unyoked.

This morning I yoked the wild ox without any difficulty and without corn. Good treatment has cured him of his wildness. They would never have been wild if they had not had wild masters. The steers do well now, require watching and directing when we go off the road to avoid deep ruts.



We are now two hundred and fifty miles from Council Bluffs and expect to reach that place in twenty-five days. I will write you from there or from Trader's Point, Iowa, opposite Council Bluffs. We calculate to reach the gold country about the first of Oct. I think we shall not till the middle or later.\* We shall go over the Sierra Nevada anyhow. We can break a road; and a thousand Yankees like those I see on the way are not to be stopped by a few feet of snow on a 9,000 foot mountain.

They reached Sacramento, California, October 25.

Every day the roads become better. Today we crossed 12 or 15 bridges. The worst road I ever met with is that between Fairview and the Cedar. I drive and Clough cooks. You know I never was good as a cook. Clough proves first rate.

I do not know what office I shall put this into but will look for one as we go along. We enjoy this sort of life. Aside from the pelf motive there is the excitement of traveling on new ground, of crossing the American continent, the Indian country, the Great Basin, South Pass, Sierra Nevada, and of setting foot on the [shores of the] Pacific as I have so often on the Atlantic. Then we have company which makes one feel as if he had lived with them twenty years. I have not yet begun to feel dull or discouraged. The fact is, the fatigue and difficulties of the journey are more in the imagination than in reality.

Our wagon is our house & stored with provisions and that is the utmost that many of our neighbors have. Few of them care for aught save a house and enough to eat. At the City I obtained the Republican [newspaper] of May 9.... I had no time when at the City to write you as I was busy every moment, the men not desiring to wait longer than necessary for me, having completed their own outfits at Dubuque. We find our bed very comfortable and sleep soundly. We found on Friday night that a double cover is necessary at the top of the wagon hoops to keep out the rain.

Friday morning, 18th. We traveled day before yesterday eighteen miles, yesterday fifteen. Roads are drying rapidly, and when dry we can easily go 20 miles a day.... Saw but one house yesterday, and none in sight now. We are getting along well. Have not yet broken anything and have proved the strength of the wagon with nine yoke of oxen. The Bellevue people keep near us; behind and a

few miles back we see three more teams—do not know where from. I hope you are well and doing well. I will have a letter ready for you by the time we reach the Bluffs. Write me there.

Your affectionate husband,

E. Booth.

**Noon, 18th.**

We are in sight of a small settlement where we will inquire for a post office. Tell Thomas that Towser has plenty to eat among the wagons, is well liked and proves a good watch dog. Will fly at every man that comes from the other company of wagons or from the neighborhood.

**19th.**

Two bad holes to cross and two bridges. Crossed the north fork of the Skunk River on a bridge about sixty feet long and so narrow that there was no room for the driver. We took off all but the wheel oxen and, having sent the forward cattle across, drove the wheel oxen on the bridge, the drivers walking behind the wagon. Mine ran the wheel against the guards and stopped. I went along the guards on the right side and turned them right and went on, I walking on the guards all the way, these guards being nothing but a small tree. At night camped in the timber, and had a heavy rain.

**May 21st.**

As yet we have met with no post office, but learn there is one some miles ahead. I will therefore finish my letter or rather journal for it has assumed that form. It is morning and the people getting breakfast....

On the night of the 18th while we were camped, a team came up that I had seen in Anamosa some ten days before I started. It is from Dubuque and had gone by way of the Rapids and been detained by worse roads than we had. It will keep on with us. We are now eight teams in company. All from

Dubuque, and Jackson & Jones counties. Eighteen men, four women, two small children, and over eighty head of cattle, four of them cows.

I forgot to say that yesterday we had a bad hill to pull up. We put on five to eight yoke to each wagon and it reminded me of cattle climbing a tree. Today, we shall probably cross the main branch of the Skunk River by ferry. There is a town and post office, but we see very few houses as we go along. The post office I speak of is about 95 miles west of Iowa City. I am not discouraged. In crossing sloughs yesterday two wagons were stalled in the mud. Each had four yoke. I went through all safe. Our cattle draw well. The wild ox is the best of all.\*

Unsigned.

[The above letter is addressed to Mrs. Mary Ann Booth, Fairview, Jones County, Iowa. The letter is postmarked with a pen by the postmaster, "Newton, Iowa, Paid 5. May 23, 1849."]

[Mails were slow and uncertain in 1849. The interchange of letters often took months. Edmund did not hear from Mary Ann until, in February, 1850, he received, at Sacramento, the letter she had written in January. Hers was an immediate reply to one he had written and mailed following his arrival in California.]

[The letter he read and reread so eagerly at the Sacramento postoffice in February, 1850, follows.]

**Anamosa, January 3d, 1850**

Dear Edmund

Last night I received your interesting letter. I thank God that you arrived in the gold region safely and I am very glad that your long and tedious journey is ended. 26 I was so crazy for joy to hear that you were well. While I read it, all boarders and children stood around me and watched and felt anxious to know what had become of you, till I finished to read it. I gave it to Durham to read it to them aloud.

Mr. Skinner asked me if I was not glad that I did not go with you and I answered no. He laughed. I told him if I had no children I would like to go with you and see the country.

Are you disappointed not to find the gold enough? When will you come back here? I hope that we will be happy to live better in the future when you get rich.

I wish you happy New Year! I will tell you what the people did on the New Year. Miss Hall hired four sleighs to have all of her scholars to ride in for the pleasure, and then they returned to school house, where they remained, played, danced and sung all the day. She invited all their parents to eat supper with their own children in school house. She was very independent. She hires Miss Wright to teach scholars how to sing every evening. She said Thomas was a good singer. Miss Hall told me that he was learning very fast and he would make the first rate scholar.

I sold my old cow which is worth twelve dollars because I wanted money to pay our tax, over six dollars.

I had written three letters to you. I directed the first to San Francisco and two others to Sutter's Fort, Upper California. I hope you received them. Thomas often told me that I must write you to send him some gold. He can read as well as William. Be careful not to send too much gold in your letter. I send our love to you.

Your affectionate wife,

Mary Ann Booth

I just learned from the newspaper that Dr. G— went to Mokelumne river. One day while resting in the shade of a tree, he took a pick and began carelessly turning up the ground. Almost on the surface he struck and threw out a lump of gold of about two pounds weight. Then the next day he went to work, and after digging about six weeks, he luckily had four hundred thousand dollars in his pocket.

**Jacksonville, Tuolumne Co., California Aug. 18th, 1850**

My dear Wife—

Doubtless you will, before receiving this, be wondering why you do not have a letter from me. It is worse with me, however, for the last letter I had from you was of date Jan. 3rd—seven months ago. A paper afterwards, marked Feb. 13th, I rec'd in May. Such is a part of life in California.

I arrived here in June from Hangtown (Placerville), but have done little as yet, for the reason that there is no water in the ravines and too much water in the rivers. I have seen and learned enough to convince me that should I spend any portion of the coming rainy season in this part of the country, I shall hardly fail of doing well. In the river (Tuolumne) on which I am now located I expect to make fifteen hundred at the least before the rainy season opens. Most men say they expect to make from three to five thousand, and I may do that.

Canals have been dug at various points along the river and the owners are waiting for lower water to enable them to throw dams across so as to leave the middle of the river bare. Had I been here three or four months ago I could have had a share in one of these canals. The canal opposite this village (Jacksonville) occupied each member over one hundred days in digging—thus costing each man over a thousand dollars. I was offered a half share for one thousand—did not accept. I and two others have marked off a claim on the bank thirty six feet square. It is now under water. In about fifteen days the river will be turned and then we shall go to work on it. We may make much and may make nothing on it.

All the mines of California are up in the mountains and there the rivers are torrents in most places. Where I now am the country is very mountainous. The sun does not seem to rise from and set on the horizon, but almost from the middle of the forenoon and into the middle of the afternoon. And yet it is hot, hot, hot from eleven 27 o'clock a.m. till three p.m. Why, here we have it daily at 100° and often at 112° in the shade!—and yet it is not sickly at all. We are too high in the mountains. If

much sickness should exist among the miners this summer, it will be owing in a great measure to their imprudence in the use of liquors, &c.

I was at Sacramento City in May. From that place I sent you a couple of papers that you might perceive the inconvenience we labored under from high water. I stayed there but two days when I found a team for the Moquelumne river and started for it. On the way, while crossing a wide plain between the city and the mountains, I stopped at a solitary house six miles from all other houses and several miles from timber. In this I found, as owners, the family who were with me on the journey from Galena.

At Hangtown, I met Compton. He did not know me at first and gazed for a half minute before he recollected who I was—I am pretty well disguised by beard, whiskers & moustaches that might grace the Grand Turk. He told me he had made \$2,000 clear and will remain till next May. His father-in-law, the oldish man with whom I left home, left us on the Humboldt, like several others, and had the misfortune to take the northern route (“Lawson's,” or as more fitly called of late “The Greenhorns' Route”) and died two days after he arrived at the mines on the Yuba river.

This route is 400 miles longer and takes a month's more time. All our company were for taking that route, believing that it forked at the distance of twelve miles, and then, by what was called the “Cherokee Trail,” led only 160 miles to the mines. I showed them by Frémont's map that the distance, even in an air line, was much greater and the story therefore was entitled to little credit. When we came to where the road forked, we stopped and read the many letters & notes left in a barrel, one of the many post offices on this route. Then without saying anything or taking a vote, one old fellow took up his whip and drove on, another followed and another. So we all kept on the old route, and well we did so.

I shall be glad to be at home again. There is no place like home, and I am weary of this wandering life. It is restless and unsatisfactory. At home I can have quiet and enjoy a book or a newspaper which I rarely do here though we have both books and newspapers in abundance. I sent to San

Francisco & Sacramento for letters about the last of July, and shall not probably receive them till the first of September.

I may occasionally send you papers. The Sonora “Herald” published 12 miles distant from here is most reliable as regards the mines—but all the papers contain much humbuggery. If you see stories in them of lumps of gold of 80 lb., 93 lb., &c, you need not believe them. We know they are false, but these stories, got up by traders, merchants & speculators to get more fools into the country, accomplish their purpose to a certain extent—witness the immense immigration across the deserts this year. They will suffer sadly. There cannot be grass enough for such a number of animals; but if they reach the sink of the Humboldt, they will not starve. Provisions have already been sent & more will be sent to their relief.

It is well enough for poor men without families to come & dig for gold, but if a man is doing well, living comfortably, &c, if he takes a notion to leave his family & come to California, I would advise Rockwell, as County Attorney, to have him indicted forthwith as non compos mentis and incapable of taking care of himself. About one third of the men here have families in the East. Some say nothing, but most complain feelingly of the separation and the long uncertainty between the receipts of letters. Most of the men here are from Massachusetts & Rhode Island. Over one hundred within 12 miles are from New Bedford.

Of course we are an orderly people. You read in the papers of murders & robberies in this county. These crimes are committed chiefly by Mexicans. The Americans were at last excited to such a degree that they met in mass meetings and required all Mexicans to leave the County. Thousands have left and they are crossing the river daily for the South. A watch is kept in the village through the night and at most, if not all, the diggings.

I board & lodge at a hotel in the village. Pay \$14 per week and have a good table furnished with “all the luxuries of the season” of the San Francisco market 28 except fresh fish, green corn, watermelons, &c. Several gardens are cultivated here and we have cabbage, new potatoes &

tomatoes. They are watered from a creek but the land is too poor for cabbages to head well and we eat them as greens.

One word about the Southern mines. A few men make hundreds or thousands in a few hours or a few days; while the many require months to accomplish the same object—this is the general feature throughout California. At the Moquelumne, I found that the men were making, in general, five dollars per day.

I came to Stockton where I mailed a paper for you and then came here. It is not probable that I shall start for home by the first of November and may not till some time in the winter. I do not intend to leave the river till driven out by the rise of the water. The dams across it will not prevent the flow of water in its old channel for it will rise 15 or 20 feet. I may spend a short time in the winter diggings about Sonora—but it is uncertain. Do not cease writing to me monthly whether you have letters from me or not. We have a monthly express and a weekly express to Stockton, San Francisco & Sacramento. I have sent by both....The people in this village number about 400—all men, no women nor children. A few peaceable Mexicans, who are hired by Americans, and no Indians. I am in good health and still weigh two hundred and ten pounds....

### **Sunday, Sept. 1st [1850].**

It is time that I finish my letter. As I have sent to Sacramento City, I hope to receive all the letters you have written since 3rd January. It is hard to be so situated but I am accustomed to endure the evils that cannot be avoided.

In this I will send you a small quantity of the dust just by way of specimen. I am looking for a chance to send a larger quantity to San Francisco by someone who will forward it to Adams & Co. or some other reliable house; and have them forward you a draft. I of course shall have duplicate, and thus can know that it has been sent, or at any rate the money will not be lost; as the Draft, if stolen, could be of no use unless endorsed by yourself—if endorsed by another it would be forgery.



Many of us have now commenced working in the banks of the river, but as yet success is not very great. I have made as much as \$11.50 a day. The days are still very hot, but the nights are growing cool and the more delicate put on their coats in the evening. The snow on the mountains is nearly gone. In a week or so regular and steady work will commence for many miles along the river, and continue till stopped by the rise in November. At the time you receive this, I shall probably be in some of the winter diggings at or near Sonora 12 miles distant from here.

All summer we have [had] new accounts from the emigration on the Humboldt. Their sufferings are very great and many teams loaded with provisions have gone to their assistance. I hope Mr. Fay and Israel Spencer are not among them, and that, if Dr. Sales is on the way, he has at least left his family at home. You will have more full accounts in the papers.

I am writing this in a physicians's office, and he has interrupted me all along to talk about the virtues of calomel and arsenic, showing me a vial of the last. I have lately had boils on the knee. Put nothing on except a towel wet in cold water three times a day and tied around it. It is as good as a poultice. Many men in this country cure by cold water and have books on that subject. When unwell, I take a bath, drink plenty of cold water and sleep it off. Have taken no medicine save a little rhubarb.

I am staying here chiefly for the children. They must have as good an education as possible, for ignorance and folly usually go together. But I would much prefer to see them honest and kind-hearted than rich. Without honesty and goodness at heart, wealth will do little towards making them happy in life. I hope Thomas is a good boy. I should not like to find him otherwise when I return home.

If your letters inform me that any of our friends are on the route for California I may write them (Sacramento P.O.) recommending them to pass the winter in the mines around Sonora. But half an inch of snow fell here last winter; while 29 in the northern mines, it was two and four feet. I have often wished I had come here last October, but the southern mines were not then known in the north.

I suppose, from seeing with my own eyes, there is gold enough in these mountains to sink a whole navy of the United States. But to dig it is another affair. The people of the U.S. and the speculators and merchants in California are insane on the subject. The only people who are in their senses are the diggers. Calif. is now flooded with provisions and goods of all kinds and competition in everything is keen. The result is many failures; and those who don't fail must be content with moderate gains.

Last summer raisins sold at the mines for their weight in gold dust, also beads to the Indians. Now raisins are 50 cts. per lb., and beads are given away as unsalable. Cabbages and tomatoes raised here, being scarce, are 50 cts. per lb. I saw a man a few days ago setting out cabbages. Fresh beef is abundant at 25c. Beef cattle are driven daily from the lower valleys and sold in all the mines. They are Mexican cattle.

### **Evening: Sept. 1st.**

Enclosed is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an ounce. I put it up in cloth, etc., to prevent the lumps breaking holes through the paper. My fear is that they will cause the loss of a letter, as from the weight it will be supposed to contain dust. I have put in very little fine dust. What is here is a sample of the dry diggings. It is the same in the river with the addition of more fine dust. You can use it as you please. If it is not bright throw it into water and shake it. The Cal. gold is not so yellow as the gold coin of the U. S. because it contains silver. I have seen both pure silver and quicksilver in lumps of gold. You will observe quartz in some of the lumps. These make no difference with us in regard to value.

I do not fancy Cal. for a farming country. I think Iowa is worth a hundred Californias for farming. We have had a few bushels of pears from Mexico, brought in frames on the backs of mules. They sold eight for \$1.00 and were about the size of black walnuts. There is 5 acres of watermelons at Sonora and they are ripe, but none have come here yet. They were sold in October last at Sacramento at 50¢ to 75¢ each. Grapes are now beginning to ripen and will continue till December. I ate a bushel of them last Oct. and Nov. They are not so plenty here however. We are too far up in the mountains.

I see no wild animals except bats and sometimes a small bird. Deer are killed sometimes, and bears come down in the winter. I have seen a young grizzly bear, a foot high, secured by a chain and an old one, stuffed, as large as a two-year-old steer.

I shall rejoice to be at home again. My old log cabin and farm have far more charms for me than all the gold of Cal. and every man who is not a born miser says the same of himself. No one to my knowledge but intends to return and live in the States. Fifty thousand at least expect to go home in November, and there are not steamers enough for them. They will be crowding homeward all winter and more in the spring. But enough. I am bound to stop somewhere. Give my love to Mother, Thomas, Harriet,<sup>\*</sup> and all.

"Mother" refers to his wife's mother; Thomas was his son; Harriet his young daughter.

Your affectionate husband,

Edmund Booth.

**Sonora, Tuolumne Co., California Nov. 3, 1850**

Dear Mary Ann

Probably you are thinking that I am now on my way home; and so, in Sept. last, I expected to be; and doubtless should be had the fates been propitious. Alas! it was otherwise; and I am now in Cal. for another winter. My last letter to you was in Aug. and finished 1st of Sept. You will probably receive it in a week from now. In that I sent you some spicemens<sup>\*</sup> (3/4 of an ounce) which I dug out of the banks of the Tuolumne River at Jacksonville.

Specimes

30

Soon after sending that, a man offered me a half share in a damming Co. on condition that I worked until it (the dam) was finished. I accepted; and after nearly two weeks of the most laborious work I ever performed, and when we were confident of turning the river in two days, we had a rain on the

22d Sept. which must have been very heavy in the higher mountains, for on the next day every dam, including our own, on the river was either destroyed or greatly injured. We waited a week for the water to fall and then concluded to let the work go over to next season and meanwhile build coffer dams. Of the latter we built two. The first was on ground too high, and the second we pushed into the middle of the river but the pressure and depth of the water were too great and we were forced to abandon it. This was on the 10th of October.

It was a most bitter disappointment all along. We had all expected to make our thousands and go home this Autumn. I perceive by the Sacramento City papers that similar misfortunes have happened in the northern mines. Some of the dams not so greatly injured were repaired. Of all the rivers turned, the San Francisco papers state the Tuolumne as having proved the best; and indeed at Hawkins' Bar I have seen two rockers take out \$3000 in an afternoon from one spot three feet long, one foot wide and six or eight inches deep. At that place the gold is fine and no lumps. At Jacksonville it is both fine and in lumps. The reason is, at the latter place there is gold in lumps on the mountains which has washed down into the river.

On the 11th of Sept., I left Hawkins' Bar, near which is the dam & canal with which I was connected, and crossed the mountains eight miles to Jacksonville in no very pleasant mood of mind but in hopes of a letter from home. Well, I arrived; but as it was so long (eight or nine months) since my last dates from home, I was almost afraid to inquire, fearful of bad news. So I sat down in the express office and read the papers; in about fifteen minutes the principal of the house came in and at once brought me the list of letters with his finger at my name. I sprang up and ran into the office where he gave me your letter of May 22nd. Its reading raised my spirits 100 degrees.

If you knew the value of letters to me in this strange land you would write more frequently—at least once a month. Your letter of last March has not come. In the Advertised list of Todd & Co. at Stockton (Oct. 1st) my name appears and I presume it [the letter] is one from you in answer to mine of last April, which went in May by private hand.

With time and labor lost and my expectations blasted, I returned to Hawkins' Bar in better spirits (from being assured that all were well at home) than I had possessed for some two or three weeks previous. I worked there about two weeks, making sometimes five dollars a day, sometimes twelve.

On the first of Nov., I left for this place where I arrived yesterday. It is the county seat—contains over a thousand inhabitants in one long street running along a gulch & closely packed—a mile long nearly, with houses of all sorts, brush houses plastered with clay (Mexican adobe), tent houses, shingle houses and frame houses. This afternoon I intend to start for Murphy's diggings a short distance from town and thence to the Coyote Flat near McLean's Ferry on the Stanislaus. I have ordered my letters to be forwarded from San Francisco to Sonora for the winter as the Expresses may not be able to travel much during the rainy season, and hence would not go into places of lesser note.

Henry & Ford wish to come next spring. That two such cautious, prudent and sensible men are so badly bitten shows the intensity of the California fever in the East. It makes me laugh. But if I was required to give a decisive yes or no to their coming I should say yes, with the remark that if they have a good prospect of getting along well where they are they had best remain. They will soon know if they do not know already that thousands have left Cal. without making their “pile.” Few out of the many make fortunes. Experience teaches men to be content with half an ounce a day. If they do better they are lucky. I have heard of two men taking out forty thousand in one week, but such cases are extremely rare.

## 31

You ask if you shall come next Spring. No. I will never consent to you and the children taking so dangerous a journey in the care of others. On the road along the Humboldt and after, men were left dead & dying, uncared for, for nearly all were weak and starving and all fearing to share the same fate. When I came, the immigrants were overloaded with provisions, and the Humboldt was not overflowed. This year everything was on the other extreme. The result will be that next summer fewer will come and they will bring more food.

I often wish Thomas was with me. That would be something like home; but the mining country is no place for boys. He could do nothing, while there is a vast amount of bad talking and no schools at all. Towser would be some consolation in this my banishment. I never see a dog but I think of Towser.\*

At the start of the trip Towser was with him. He does not state what became of the dog, but in later years Thomas recalled that his father told him the dog gradually dropped behind the wagons and after a few days failed to come up to their wagon.

You had better rent the farm. Rent it on shares if it is still the custom. In my last I stated that I was intending to send you something. My connection with the damming Co. nearly emptied my pocket, for board was \$15 per week and a set of tools will cost over \$50. You must wait a little longer.

You did right in selling the draft to Mr. Ford. I am afraid to send a draft as it would require me first to send the gold to Stockton to purchase one. Men have been entrusted to do this and have run away with the gold. Nevertheless, I will send you something by & by—but don't look for letters soon nor often.

A route is now being opened (so the papers say) from Carson Valley to Stockton. This would bring emigrants directly to the Southern Mines.

You ask what I did with my mattress, &c. I brought them through with me and at Weavertown sold the mattress and pillows for \$10.75. Sold everything at auction except three blankets, clothes & medicine. These last I have with me now in the carpet bag. A man in the mines cannot carry many things about with him.

I really wish I was at home in my old log cabin—but I think I did as well to come. I am sure I can get more than enough to pay for it. Cal. is a world upside down—nothing like home comforts and home joys. But patience—a few months more will fix everything. Remember me to all. Love to the children, Mother and the rest.

Your affectionate husband,

Edmund.

**Sonora, Calif. Jan. 20th, 1851.**

Dear Mary Ann

Above you have a picture of San Francisco as it was a year ago. You observe the Island of Yerba Buena and the north shore of the Bay. the sheet [of paper] was given me by a friend who has them for sale; and, when [I was] about to commence this with a goose quill (a great rarity here), another pulled out his gold pen and I am now scribbling along with that without the usual formal commencement of a letter.

I will begin. It is over four months since my last advices from home. Yours of Sept. 7th I rec'd Nov. 18th: A previous letter of July rec'd Nov. 9th. The one containing medicine, which you directed to Sacramento City, I have not been able to obtain.

You will naturally ask how I have made out in mining. I can answer only tolerably. Not near as well as I expected when I wrote you last. You are not, however, to suppose that I am in despair, going to shoot or hang myself or that I am even discouraged. I know the mines too well for the last named feeling to take possession of me. My greatest annoyance is the absence of rainwater for washing out the dust. It has rained in earnest only three or four times this winter. The last rain commenced on the night of the 5th. A few showers on the 6th and the 7th. Since then we have been cursed with as fine and clear a sky as was ever dreamed of by any enthusiast.

To give you some idea of what I am doing I will relate the experience of the past two weeks. On the 3rd of this month, having no water where I was digging, I went (alone) to "Camp Seco" three miles distant, on a prospecting tour. On the 4th 32 prospected most of the day and found a good spot. 5th, returned to Sonora, put a paper into the p. o. for Henry & returned to Camp Seco with my tools. On the 6th, worked one third of the day; interrupted by rain; got \$3.75. On the 7th worked half day—stopped by rain at noon; got \$3.75. this is fair pay—generally considered good. 8th, worked all day—got \$2.50. Poor pay—hole gave out. 9th, tried several places—got \$1.50. 10th, returned

to Sonora, prospecting among the mountains on the way. Same night was again at Camp Seco.

11th, brought my tools to Sonora to the old place. Tried a new place near it and got in the afternoon \$0.50. 12th, Sunday. 13th, Monday. Opened a new hole—made \$2.12. 14th, opened another hole; made \$2.50. 15th, opened a third hole; made \$8.00. In this was a two-dollar lump. 16th, enlarged the hole and made \$18.00. 17th, made \$10.00. 18th, Saturday. Did not work, owing to a bad cold in the head & chest caused by exposure to wet at Camp Seco The roof of the house being common sheeting, my bedding was wet by the rain. Got a box of Moffatt's pills at a druggist's for \$1.00 and am now well.

Today made \$5.00. Was obliged to stop two hours before sunset (sunset with you) owing to the water being turned to thick mud by being repeatedly used. In the morning shall have water in the hole that was dug today—but unless rain falls in two or three days cannot wash at all. We shall then throw up earth and wash when it rains. This present winter is almost a perfect contrast to the last. Last winter there was too much rain. Now, not enough, and yet last September when the experience of two hundred years forbade the idea, we had a storm that broke all our dams and ruined many thousands of us. This California climate is the finest in the world, but, like many a fine woman, it has some whimsical vagaries.

Here in the Southern Mines men make in general \$4 to \$8 per day; and yet I know men who work day after day and do not more than make expences and sometimes not that. They are few, however. In the north, if newspaper accounts are true, it is worse. I ought to have been here last winter. The best places so far as known are dug out, exhausted; and the mines are not so enormously profitable as they have been. Still a man by perseverance can make a good sum in the course of a few months or a year or two.

The winter, I find, is the best time for profitable digging, and I would rather spend two winters in the mines than one summer. Should I stay next summer, it will be in the large gulches where is water the year round—but low in summer.

**No. 2d; Jan. 24th, Friday evening.**



This time I have a good steel pen—better than the golden pen with which I wrote No. 1.

The \$4 lump of gold, found Wednesday, is in my pocket—a rough flat lump. Today I worked alone and made \$11.75—good day's work—in this is a lump of \$7.50. It is about 3/4 of an inch long, 1/2 inch wide—strongly resembles in shape a mitten, with the hand a little closed, half the thumb cut off, and the part rounded; and has also the wrist. I am thinking seriously of sending you these and other specimens. The men here wish to buy the big lump—but I will not sell it and told them. I shall send it home....

After supper this evening I went down to the express office and was handed your letter of Nov. 4th. You little imagine what a poor wandering exile feels when he receives a letter from the loved ones at home. I have seen men shed tears when speaking of home.

You need not fear that I shall not get enough to satisfy me. My wish is to make from three to five thousand. How long it will take is uncertain. One man lately took out near Sonora eighteen pounds in a day (about \$3,500).

I am glad that the children and you all are well and of your assurance that Thomas is a good boy. I am more anxious about them than about anything else. I hope they will grow up with feelings of truth, justice and humanity. We see too little of these qualities in the world. But still there are some men who carry them out in daily practice and these are worth all the rest of the world around them.

Here in California I find good men as well as bad; and somehow or other I always have friends among the good. I have sent you and Thomas each a book as 33 Christmas and New Year's presents. I would send one to Harriet but books for children are not to be had here. For the same reason Julia must wait for her ring—ladies are very scarce in the mountains and of course the traders do not bring rings for them. You will probably read in the papers of wars between the Indians and the Miners. No Indians are near us and you need not be anxious on the subject. I have not seen more than three or four Indians since last June except about three weeks since when some

twenty came down from the Stanislaus to obtain a warrant against a white man who had robbed them. This they obtained and departed.

If Henry & Ford are not cured of the Cal. fever and should conclude to start, they ought to have two wagons—one like the light stage wagon, the other a common two-horse wagon (an old one will do if strong)—and, on reaching the first or second desert, throw away the heavy wagon after removing their provisions and team to the light one, thus having a good team of six horses or five or six yoke of oxen to one light wagon. Kiln-dried corn meal for the deserts should be provided and never used till on these deserts.

There are four principal deserts, viz, 1st, from Fort Laramie to the Sweetwater; 2d, from the Pacific Springs to Green River (some grass at the Little and Big Sandy), over 70 miles; 3d, the last 70 miles down the Humboldt—this is not called a desert, but it is little better in so large an emigration; 4th, from the sink of the Humboldt to Carson River, over 40 miles. This is the worst of all because of the heat, the bad water and the exhausted state of the animals. I might say a 5th desert, from the crossing of the summit of the Sierra Nevada to the first settlements, for it is then the dry season and poor feed; chiefly, at first, of the leaves of trees cut down for the purpose.

But whether Henry & Ford ought or not to come, I leave for themselves to decide. They may be assured that they will have a hard life of it anyhow. If they had no families I would not hesitate to say “come along and rough it—if you work resolutely and perseveringly, keep clear of gambling and the bottle (the two great curses of California), I will warrant your making more in one year than you can in five at home.”

My greatest fear in their case is that it will cost one or both their lives. I work every day in water but have as good health as ever I had at home. And in fact my Cal. residence has improved me in that respect. Should they come, inform me immediately on their starting and, should I be in the country, I will leave letters for them at Sonora, Stockton and Sacramento City, informing them of my exact locality. They must come direct to Sonora.

I shall remain in the Southern Mines till I go home. I am sure that they are as a whole preferable to the northern, being more extensive and less crowded. And here I would say a word to those of our neighbors, who are wise or foolish enough (as the case may be) to leave home for Cal., that unless they can keep sober whether in prosperity or adversity and can bear up under difficulties and disappointments, they had better go and hang themselves than start for Cal.

**Jan 24; No. 3d.**

We want nothing at this time but a good heavy rain to enable us to wash with more advantage. Had I water, I should make more per day than I do now. As it is I am compelled to use the same water many times in a day till it becomes in muddiness of the consistency of Indian pudding. This compels me to work slowly and to stop two or three hours before sunset.

I live in a tavern (or rather boarding house for it has no bar and no liquors) kept by two black fellows (fine ones) from Florida and a young Mexican who would from his appearance be taken for an American. It is called the "Florida House"; board, \$12 per week. I sleep in my blankets on the floor, i.e., the bare ground, sound and comfortably for I am used to it. Rise before the sun, roll up and throw my blankets into a corner and, as the sun rises, sit down to breakfast of hot coffee, fresh meat, grizzly bear, vensions, butter cakes, applesauce, etc., etc. then go to work 1/2 mile below the town.

Work all day and at night clean up my gold, throw it into a tin box (one we used many years to keep medicine in), put it into one of the capacious pockets of my 34 miner's coat and saunter into town. My pantaloons (over my boots) are at such times covered to the knees with a thick coating of mud and I am splashed from head to foot. But there is no clear water wherewith to wash my face. So I go directly to the Florida House for the purpose. Having done that, I sit down by the fire—put the tin box on the coals and in a few minutes the gold is dry. Then going to the counter I weigh it and thereby know the result of my day's work.

Putting the gold into my purse, I go out to the express office and read the papers or sit and dry my pants at the fire. The evening passes in reading, talking, thinking of home, or as I am now—writing.

It has not rained since the 7th of this month—over three weeks; and some 50,000 miners, scattered the whole length of Cal., are praying for rain or growling and even swearing at the want of it. Every morning as I rise, and every evening before I throw myself on my hard bed, I look anxiously at the sky. This scarcity of rain will cause the loss of millions of dollars to the miners, for immense quantities of dirt have been dug up to be washed this winter. The first rain that enabled us to wash did not fall till after the 20th of Nov. During the present week I have been throwing up dirt, as have many others, and have hopes of rain almost daily, as for some days past clouds have been floating in the sky.

I have procured a copy of the “Alta Cal.” of Jan. 4th to send you. You will notice how cautious it is and how sarcastic on the big-lump and such-like stories. This paper, the “Cal. Courier” and “Public Balance” are the only reliable papers in regard to the mines. Most of the others have recommenced the old game of big story telling in order to bring on another immense emigration, in the spring now near at hand.

I hope the Cal. fever has passed its climax and is on the decline. It is like the mulberry speculation in one respect. Those who came first made out best. Metcalf informs me that Miles Russel and wife left for Cal. last spring. I notice this to say that no man should bring his wife or children unless he intends to settle permanently in the country. I am inclined to bring you all here some years hence and settle as a farmer near San Jose or South of the Bay or near Vallejo (in Napa Valley) north of the Bay. This winter climate is decidedly beautiful and no labor required to keep animals from dying of cold or starvation. At present the country is too unsettled—too much like Texas & Arkansas in their infancy. It has too many desperadoes.

In all my letters of late I have forgotten to say one thing that is of importance to the emigrants. It is this—every man should bring with him and use freely on the journey potatoes. Medical writers and chemists maintain that the potato contains more potash than any other edible in common use,

and that the scurvy is caused by the absence of potash in the human system. Let every man bring a bushel—also at least 50 lb. sugar, besides flour, meat, beans, coffee, dried apples, a small quantity of vinegar, etc., etc. An appetite on the deserts is that of a wolf.

In your letter of Sept. were a few lines by Thomas. I assure you I was delighted with it. I wish him to write again. He writes as well as I did at his age. You can sell the gold or some of it which I send you. Let him have the knife & jewsharp he wishes for—also books.

When I mention the value of lumps, you must understand it is at the Cal. price of \$16 per ounce. Thus the “mitten lump” here is \$7.50 but at \$18 per ounce it is twelve per cent more—that is \$8.40. Weigh the gold in a physician's scales for it is sold by troy weight. If you sell it by common weight you will lose half of it. Do not think that because I have not been so successful as I had hoped and as I wish, I am disheartened, etc. No. I keep good heart and work on; almost every day able to make more than expences and many times much more. The only question is one of time.

Thomas, when not attending school, can help Henry in such work as is suitable for his age and strength. I think he will be nine years old next month. Am I right?

I will put the gold in a separate letter. It will be four months before I know whether you receive it. Write immediately.

Yours affectionately,

Edmund.

35

**Sonora, Cal., Feb. 6th, '51.**

Dear Mary Ann,

Much excitement prevails just now in Sonora in consequence of a new discovery of quartz gold—that is, a vein of gold in quartz rock. These veins are being discovered from time to time and I am

satisfied mining will be carried on for very many years to come. But the veins cannot be worked without expensive machinery. You will observe rock in some of the gold I sent you. Yesterday I found a lump, weight \$3.12 1/2c, a curious mixture of quartz and gold of the size of a large hazelnut. It will not do to send in a letter. You observe among the specimens a small piece of dark-colored stone with gold adhering. Last Monday I found a lump of \$4.25 which I sent you. The same day a Mexican found a lump of four pounds—worth about \$800.00.

I will say a word here on the subject of Indian hostilities, that mother may not be alarmed. The Indians are mostly armed only with bows and arrows and could not reach Sonora without passing through several camps (or diggings) and they would not venture on that. They are no better match for the Americans than are the Mexicans. The war (if so it may be called) is in Mariposa County—look at Frémont's map for the Mariposa and other rivers. The spelling of some of the rivers on that map is Spanish, but not much altered by being Americanized. Dr. Sales has the map. Is he coming to California? Tell me who among the neighbors will come next Spring. They should be accustomed to labor and to habits of temperance and possess resolution enough to bear up under disappointments for every man here meets with a thousand such. For instance, he spends several days in sinking a hole for gold and in the end finds nothing. In such case his only remedy is to try again in another place. An indomitable perseverance is a necessary qualification in a gold hunter. But I have written enough to kill you in the reading. I will now attend to the dust. I have just weighed out for you 2 1/4 ounces. It included all the largest lumps, I have that can go in a letter without making it too rough. The eight largest I weighed separately. The first in weight or “mitten” lump is \$7.50; 2nd, \$5.25—has a string around its neck; 3rd, \$4.25; 4th (solid lump about or near a half inch long and of the size of the end of your little finger), \$4.00; 5th, \$3.87; 6th, \$2.75; 7th, \$2.00; 8th, \$1.75. You must remember that all these valuations are at the Cal. rate of \$16.00 per ounce. To make it \$18.00 per ounce you must add 12 cents to each dollar. Thus the mitten lump at \$18.00 per oz. is \$8.40. The 2nd is \$5.98, and so on with all the rest. Weigh (if you wish to sell) at Dr. Sales' in his medical scales. At \$18.00 per oz. the whole amount is \$40.50. I send some fine dust. It is more often met with than lumps.

This letter must go into the express office tonight or early in the morning. I will close for I have to sew up the purse and go to the Ex. office.

My love to all Let Thomas write me in your letters. Send me a few—three or four—boxes of Mandrake pills by mail. Make a kind of case (similar to those in which garden seeds are sold at the stores) of pasteboard. Hannah will tell you what it is. Put in the pills (no boxes). Sew it up, put in a letter and write on the envelope the word “medicine” and direct it to me at San Francisco. I want them for any emergency and I never shall be able to obtain those at Sacramento. That city is 150 miles distant in a northwest direction. I have still two boxes of the Mandrakes—having used none for a year.

I hope you will all do well and live comfortably. Write often. Goodbye,

Your affectionate husband,

Edmund Booth

**Feb. 8th, Saturday Evening.**

On closing my letter last Thursday night, I found on inquiry at the office that the Express had not come in. It came yesterday and departs for Stockton tomorrow morning. I will ascertain whether it takes the mail and if so send by that, thus enabling me to prepay postage. We had but little rain on Thursday night—not enough to fill a pint cup in the morning but good for vegetation. The valleys & hillsides are now green with the young grass. No winter here and no snow except on Thanksgiving day 36 when it fell a half inch and was gone next morning. The weather has been spring-like all along. We want rain.

Last Friday morn I looked at a place that had been recommended and where about a hundred miners (green miners) are sinking holes. Did not like the looks of the ground and returned to my old place. Today made \$5.50—and could make double the amount if I had water near the place.

I will continue to send you papers as long as I am near a post office. It is to be hoped that Congress will establish a mint at San Francisco and let the mines and miners alone—neither leasing nor selling them. Congress does not understand the real state of things here, and the U. S. Treasury will make as much by the mint (the percentage) as by any other course. But enough and perhaps more than enough of my pen at this time. I shall expect early in March an answer to my letter of Nov.

3rd.\*

Postmark and address read as follows: "Stockton, Feb. 13, Cal. \$2.80. Mrs. Mary Ann Booth, Anamosa, Jones Co., Iowa. Reynolds Express & Co."

**Anamosa, April 3d, 1851**

My dear Husband

Yesterday the southern mail first arrived here before the sunset, before the other mail from Dubuque. Mr. Perkins returned from the Post Office with some book which he handed me. I sat down to begin to read it after supper. He went to the P. O. again to wait for the other mail from Chicago. While I read to Celia, before I had read two pages, I was interrupted by opening the door. Perkins came in and smiled at me, I understood and started from my chair and abandoned Celia and caught your letters which I was in a hurry to open with trembling feelings for I feared that there were bad news in them; but I found all good news from you. I read your long and interesting letters three times. I never get tired of reading any of your letters.

I did not expect that you would send me any gold more, dont send me any more for I am afraid of [its] being lost or robbed. I feel very bad that you sleep on your hard bed on the floor, and board 12 dollars per week, that is dear, dear.

Mr. Livermore will rent your farm and repair and split some five hundred rails because the base rails are rotten. Shares for us, to wit: one third of crops to be ready to husk and one fourth of grains to be also ready to thrash. I am going to remove this week. I shall rent a small house here that is



cost two or three dollars a month. Perhaps we will live by ourselves, till you come home. I shall try to buy our old cow again which is now cost from 12 to 15 dollars.

Harriet is very fond of playing with a doll with which she is steady to play daily. When she goes to bed she cries for her doll so I gave it to her which she put on her arm with heartily laugh and joy. I kiss her and leave her alone in the bed. A few moments after I went to the bed to look at her again, she fell asleep so sweetly with her dolly hugged close to her. I kissed her again gently. I wish you could see her and her rosy cheeks and how she looks innocent and beautiful.

Be careful not to show so much gold to the miners, for the danger of being robbed and murdered, for your wife's sake, and take care of yourself particularly when you are on your way for home, dont talk about gold with the strangers, passengers, nor tell them where you come from. When you arrive here you must be careful not to tell our folks and neighbors how much you shall have made money. Some people of Iowa returned from California last winter and would not say anything about how much they had made. I suppose they were afraid of being robbed or murdered.

You wrote last that you were inclined to bring us all there some years hence. Oh yes, I am willing to go there too. I am going to tell you that I have a great deal ideas going to Oregon to settle as a home for life. For the country is beautiful, healthy and agreeable for us in the winter.

It is time for me to go to bed for all are gone to sleep in beds while I am alone writing! Good night.

M. A.

37

There are many men and women and children who are passing through the town for Cal. There were four teams stopped at Fords' last night for Cal.

I put pills into your old skin [pouch] and return it to you again. You will laugh at it. I wish I could put myself in this letter and go to Cal. to see you but, oh dear, I am too large to fold myself up in

this small sheet. Thomas has written a few lines. Please answer his letter, he will be pleased very much with your letter. I expect another letter from you in May. I will answer it immediately.

Your affectionate wife,

M. A. B.

**Sonora, Cal. April 27th, '51.**

Dear Mary Ann

I have just placed in the hands of Reynolds & Co. (Express Agents) two hundred dollars for you. They will obtain a draft of Adams & Co. at San Francisco and will forward you—bringing me the duplicate. Should you not receive the draft, let me know and I will forward you the duplicate. If stolen it will be worthless, as it will not be complete till endorsed by yourself; and if endorsed by others the act would be forgery and the parties liable to State Prison—forgery being always heavily punished.

I will mention that I today bought an apple of the size of a common black walnut for one shilling—the only green apple I ever ate, in Cal. About a bushel of them are in the street from Mexico.

In your last letter you requested me not to send another draft; but I think better to send it and that you buy a good frame house or cottage in Anamosa and live in it or at Perkinses', just as you wish. When I was at home Reed was building & selling houses at \$125. or less. Get a good one on high ground that you may have a dry cellar & be as much as possible away from the fogs, fleas, fever & ague of the marshes. It will give a better chance of health. By buying the house (buy the lot also on which it stands) the money will not be lost, as it will sell again at any time. You will have offers enough, for men will sell anything—some even their own souls, for gold—and the draft will be as good as that. So if you don't like the first offers, you need not hurry.

If you have more money afterwards than you need, let Henry have some. I owe him for your and the children's board and I wish to do something to help Mother. Do not lend under the circumstances. You can always get things more to your liking by having the cash in your pocket.

In my last I was complaining of the want of rain. About the 20th of March the rainy season began in earnest and continued for a month. Snow fell to the depth of three inches one night. The rain enabled me to work to great advantage and, except when its falling prevented, I continued at work, making—and still am making—in general \$8 to \$10 per day, rarely under \$8. The largest amount in any one day was \$31. I shall keep at work till I go home. I cannot say when that will be. I may remain here a year longer and may find a big lump or a rich lead and be off.

It is Sunday afternoon; and as is always the case on Sunday, the town from the North to the South end (a full mile) is thronged with men from the mines around. On every Sunday, for the past four months, a Mexican circus or a bull-fight has been in exhibition. I never attended either. The sorry ponies and mules which they ride do not give me any high idea of their artistic powers.

I weighed in March and found myself a two-hundred-and-eighteen- pounder. This is a gain of thirty-eight pounds since my arrival; or thirty-three since leaving home. Cal. is a great country, not only for growing vegetables but humans.

I have written in a hurry, in a room occupied as the express office, barroom, billiard room & justice's office, and [with] a crowd of men around.

My love to Thomas, Harriet, Mother and all. It will soon be May with you and then maybe you can have an idea of our winter. It was May nearly all winter here.

Your aff. husband,

E. Booth.

**Sonora, Cal. June 8, 1851**

Dear Mary Ann

This time I have a batch of capital letters to answer. On the 24th of May I rec'd Hannah's & Julia's letter of 3d April (mailed on that day) and last night yours, Thomas' & Danforth's arrived. This is glorious to one so far from home and so far beyond t'other side of sundown. I wish you and the children, Thomas, Danforth, William and Julia would write me every month. The children have more time, as they have abundant time for their amusements, and they are usually more minute in their statements than older persons, and hence they give me more information. Besides it will accustom them to the use of the pen & putting their thoughts and impressions on paper; and they will find the benefit hereafter.

I will not criticise their letters very severely, as there is much that can be learned only by reading and practice, but there is one thing which needs only to be pointed out to be mended, and is simply this—to begin a sentence or the name of a person or place with a capital letter—also the first personal pronoun singular. I hope this will not frighten them and prevent their writing. Let them write on freely, as they would speak....

They should also pay some attention to punctuation. A dot at the end of a sentence at least should always be made—this for a beginning in punctuation. Careful attention to punctuation in reading is the only thing that will do the rest. Rules are of very little value in this matter. It depends altogether on the meaning of what one is writing. Very few of our best writers punctuate correctly. I hope these remarks will not lead the children into the other extreme to do as some of our merchants do here, putting a dot after every word. In the street, over the stores, I read “Illinois. Store.” “Chili. Beans.” I make these observations in good feeling. The children are young and have time for improvement and a long life and the whole world before them; and when they become men this world will be their own. It is important, then, that they be ready to act their parts.

Yesterday I saw a drunken Mexican woman, more Indian than Spanish, taken up bodily, because of her stubbornness, and carried to jail. Sonora is now a city and all the drunkards and disturbers are promptly arrested and locked up. The temperance society of young people at Anamosa, if they could see the ruin & wretchedness brought on many husbands & fathers here whose families are east of the mountains, would see abundant reason to congratulate themselves on their pledge. One of my partners here, a Chilean near whom I have worked for six months, an honest-hearted, frank, open, manly, whole-souled fellow, and one of the best prospectors I ever found (having been a miner in Chile) is in the practice of being drunk for a week at a stretch. It is but a few nights since he gambled away, he himself told me, \$200.

Danforth asks if he shall come here. I answer No. To be a successful miner needs a combination of judgment and experience—but judgment especially in prospecting. It is known to my friends that I have been doing well the greater part of the time here; and several have gone out to the place in hopes of finding good diggings near me and found nothing. Several times they have provoked me into a hearty laugh at their total want of common sense in selecting ground.

On one occasion I walked with two of them some 30 rods from my hole; and, judging from the shape of the ground, there was gold in a certain spot. I recommended them to dig there and left. In about an hour I went to see what result, and found them digging about one rod away from the spot. I told them they would find nothing there and so it proved. They were discouraged and left. Some weeks after this, I commenced at the spot I had spoken of to them and in a space of four feet by six & 18 inches deep, took out over \$25 in two days.

It will be time enough for Danforth and all the rest to travel a few thousand miles when they are men. They will live to see a half dozen or more railroads stretching across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Aye, across the old continent too, and from the Arctic to the Antarctic ocean to boot. The world makes as rapid progress now in 25 years as formerly in 200. Civilization is advancing or rather giving way to a higher grade; and the ice of the poles (its salt neutralized by

some chemical mode yet to be discovered) will be wanted to cool the tropics—or humans who are to inhabit them.

The railroad from Dubuque to Keokuk will form one in the thousand links in the great network of railroads, which is soon to cover the earth. It is important for themselves that the stockholders select honest men as Directors. If such are dishonest the work will be embarrassed, delayed and many of the stockholders may be ruined. Nevertheless, the road will be built, for that is its destiny. The progress of things will extend it to St. Louis and Cape Horn on the South, and to the great British railroad from Halifax to the Pacific on the North.

The slow age has gone by, and cow paths and old-fashioned stage roads & canals are following in its wake. It is not absurd to say now that in half a century balloon travel will be as common as steaming now. Everybody will travel, and everybody will see everybody else. What an interchange of intellect and what an enlargement of ideas! And how important that the children should be prepared for it by a free & full education.

Treaties have been concluded between the Indians in the Southern mines and the U. S. govt. commissioners. One of the com. has gone north to effect the same object there.

I will not send more money until I know whether you wish it. The rent of the farm to Mr. Livermore and the terms you state are all satisfactory. I am too far off, and you must manage all these matters. I hope you will get the old cow if you wish it. She was a good and gentle animal.

New diggings have lately been discovered at Placerville, and it is said they intend to bring water (by canal) over 20 miles from the South Fork of the American River to enable them to wash out the gold.

I have cut out of the “Missouri Republican” a letter from Cal. It is rather funny, being written by a greenhorn of a doctor, for he must be a greenhorn who will have it that all is evil and nothing good in this country. Much of what he states is true; but he had seen only a small portion of the mining region. I have no fears that I cannot find gold. Discoveries are making almost daily and in places

not previously suspected to contain a particle. I do not send the printed letter as a picture of Cal. but that you may see some of the extravaganzas on the dark side. Everybody here laughs when reading it. I have seen no such mass of wretchedness as the letter describes, but I am aware that in the north the mines are overcrowded, because all the roads, via the South Pass, terminate there; and the northern editors do all in their power to keep men in the north. For a year or two past the Editors of Stockton & Sacramento have been playing the Kilkenny cats in this matter. The miners would not lose if both were whipped.

A few days since, another lump of 15 pounds was found by the same company that found the 28 lb. lump. It is about half gold. These two lumps and the one of 22 lb. over a year ago here were all at the foot or sides of the same mountain. This mountain is known to contain veins of gold in the quartz rock. The mountain is in fact quartz and is the highest part of the principal street of Sonora. All winter, after a rain, I have seen Mexicans, and often Americans, walking along the street slowly & stooping over, looking for lumps which the rain uncovers. Sometimes they would scrape up the dirt in the road and wash it out for the stuff.

It is time for me to say what I am doing. But first, Metcalf—after the fire in San Francisco last May, he started for the city to work at his trade. I have not heard from him since. By that fire every newspaper establishment except one (the “Alta California”) was destroyed, and hence I have not been able to obtain weekly papers to send you. The Courier (the best paper in Cal.) has been started again & I send you the first number. The Sonora Herald has a “Phila. Editor” and thereby hangs an ironical proverb. It is the poorest thing of a paper in the state and rarely worth sending home.

40

If it was not for the Almanac I should not know whether it was summer or winter. Frémont was right. Cal. has an Italian sky. I would rather live in this country than in Iowa or any northernwintery state. Iowa is good for the future. For the present, a man there must spend two or three months in autumn providing fodder for his animals in winter, and then spend the winter in feeding it out to his animals, feeding the fire and feeding his own stomach and has no time for aught else.

I suppose you will receive this letter, & another containing a Draft of \$200 by the Steamer from San F. of May 1st. some day next week—perhaps tomorrow night. The letter of Hannah & Julie mailed April 3d left N. York by the mail steamer of the 11th and came to hand on the 24th of May—43 days from New York—but the newspapers by the same steamer arrived several days previous. Allowing the draft a month to reach N. Y., 9 days to arrive in Anamosa, you have it tomorrow night. If you answer it immediately, the steamer of the 26th of this month will bring it; and, in the first days of August, it will come to hand. The letters I rec'd last night did not come for 5 or 6 days after the papers.

You must be careful; and not allow Thomas to bathe in deep water. It will be perhaps some years before he can swim well. He must begin in shallow water—at least where the water is not higher than his head. Boys are drowned every summer for want of this precaution.

When you want help in getting wood or in any other work, you can hire a man to do it. I hope you will buy a house. Have it fixed if necessary so that it will be good & comfortable and get a good cooking stove at Dubuque.

Go yourself if the daguerreotypist does not come down. Give Hannah a five to go with you on a shopping excursion and for the sake of company. At all events have your own & the children's daguerreotype taken in one picture, and also Mother's in another.

I will mail this today that it may go on tomorrow and be in time for the steamer of the 15th. Enjoy yourselves well. Get luxuries, a barrel of dried apples, etc. My love to all,

Goodbye,

Edmund.

**Anamosa, August 17th, 1851**

Dear husband



Excuse me, for this paper is poor; I cannot buy paper today for it is Sunday. Our children T and H went to the meeting, so I am alone to write to you. I received your two long and interesting letters of June 8th, as I did expect it the same time, as I account days and weeks, that you would answer my letter of April 7 or 8, which I cannot remember what time I begun to write. I am still glad that you are well and that you are doing well. I only am disappointed that you are not yet coming home as I expected to find some words in your last letters that you were coming home.

I bought five acres of land at 90 dollars between Clark's and this town. A man, his name is Handy, heard that I wanted a new house on that land. He came to see me about building a house for me and he said that he would build very cheapest in this town so I agreed with him. He said that he would build before long and that there is no lumber now because lumber and logs at the mills were swept by the flood. He will build a small one 16 by 20 or 21 and also find lumber and stuffs himself, and he is skillful to plaster. He will finish my house, he asked for 150 dollars to build and find every thing to need for the house which is very cheap. He is frank and honest and a Christian. I have not money enough to pay for building, but only 100 dollars now; he says he will take 100 dollars now for building till I can get fifty dollars for him.

I want you to send me more if you dont come home now. I have also forty dollars in gold of lumps and dust which I cannot sell here, nor in Dubuque, because 41 they would not take [give] sixteen dollars an ounce. I do not want that you will send me gold again. The drafts are as good as money which all the merchants like to buy. I must wait for George to come here this fall, so I shall try to sell gold dust to him to get money. I believe that he can sell them in St. Louis or New Orleans at 16 dollars per ounce.

I shall be glad when my home is done. I wish that you can get rich at once so you are coming home. I dreamed often that you came back and that I embraced and kissed you and that I told you that I was very happy to see you, but when I awoke and found myself in bed and you in California!

I shall hire a man to break one or two acres of my land where our new house is on for the garden next spring. I hope that you will be here at the time. If you are not coming back next winter I shall

live lonesome in our new house in all the gloomy winter; my tears start in my eyes and fall down my cheeks while I am writing, for I think that you will never come back and that you will say that you will stay in Cal. every other year. I did not answer your letters immediately, I received them on thirty of July, because I felt very discouraged, that you were not coming home. I read Californian papers that the miners are greatly discouraged and could not get rich enough as they expected before they went to Cal. It will keep you long away in Cal. I have been sorry that you had gone to California.

I did not also answer every [one of] your letters for the postage is so heavy. I do not like to pay postage for our folks, no, I wont. They are rich enough, we are poor. Your last letter of June & its postage's marked \$1.60, I surprised to see the postage which is asked too much. I went to the P.O. to see the post master about it. He said that the Express charged on it...[letter torn] one dollar for sending. I know that is not business...[letter torn] I should not pay one dollar and sixty cents for the letter in which contained nothing [nothing was enclosed].

You dont know how I wish that you would be here. I rather die if you dont come back soon. I am so trouble to take care of our children greatly. Thomas is growing bigger, bigger. He troubles me greatly for he disobeys and wont mind me what I advise him to take care of himself and I tell him thousand times that he must not go into the river often a week, for I am afraid that he would be dangerously drowned, before he can learn how to swim, but he never mind me, so I whipped him, etc.

Harriet is growing fast, she can run about the streets, it worries me all time. I can not keep both of them about home. I wish that I can live in the country which is safer for them, than in the town. They learn the bad children who swear. Julia told me that Thomas often swears. I am very sorry for it. I am afraid that he will become bad and be in bad habit of swearing. I am sorry that I can not hear him do so. I wish that you will write that he must not swear again.

I hope that Thomas will be a good boy again when we shall live in our new house about half mile from this town. I shall give him good books and interesting stories to read often. He can not be steady to read here, for many children are playing round him, and calling him to play with them.

There is no help for him to read, etc. I can not wiat for him to write a few lines in this letter, for he writes so slow. I must finish this letter this evening, it will go tomorrow morning.

We all weighed—myself, 121 pounds; Thomas, 62 pounds; and Harriet, 31 pounds. I bought our old cow at 15 dollars. I hired a man to cut hay, 2 1/2 tons, and to haul and stack it on my new home land. He asked for five dollars. I shall keep my heifer till you come back. Cattle are asked too much this time, horses are cost from 100 to 150 dollars here. I do not believe that we can go to Dubuque to take a daguerreotype. I shall want a new cooking stove, when my new house is done. Perhaps we shall all go to Dubuque to get it and shall have our daguerreotypes taken in one picture, but I think that Harriet cannot have it, because she wont be still. The cooking stove is cost sixteen dollars in Dubuque now. Send our ardent love to you,

Yours,

Mary Ann

42

**Sonora, Cal. Aug. 29th, '51.**

Dear Mary Ann

Your letter of June 15th & 23d came to hand yesterday....Nothing gives me so great pleasure as advices from home.

Some days I make two dollars—some days an ounce. It is variable. All the dirt I wash is carried a half mile to the water at 75¢ per load. A one-horse cart is drawn by a horse or mule. I have a better claim but do not work it because it would be necessary to haul the dirt over a hill. The race or canal of which I spoke in my last proved a total failure, there not being water enough by the time it was finished.

Another is being dug (or graded) to bring water from the Stanislaus River 15 miles. A saw mill is now building on it to saw the plank with which an aqueduct is to be built the whole distance. It will take a few months to finish this.

Do as you please about buying land and building. If you build (I like the idea) have the house well finished, plastered, and made comfortable—a good tight floor that no fleas can come through. Cal. has abundance of fleas in summer—rats too the year round, and ground squirrels, as plenty in the large valleys as in Iowa. A good country nevertheless.

I will send you money again—not this time. I believe it is as well invested in land near or in Anamosa as it can be almost anywhere. But I hope this high price of land (which I did not expect) does not result from any sudden feverish excitement and that they do not intend to go up to California prices as they were a few months ago. Then city lots in San F—sold for \$50,000 and upwards. These very lots now sell at from \$5,000 to \$15,000. None higher. Everything has gone down; and I now board comfortably and luxuriously at \$8. a week—just half the price I paid a year ago.

A few days since I mailed the “Alta” for you. You will notice the execution of thieves. As such things are looked on with horror at home, I will just say that the only way to put a stop to murders, robberies & burnings in this country is to put the scoundrels out of existence. The first legislators were strangers when elected and chose men equally strangers for judges, etc., and all came to make a fortune & go home. Hence men are in office who are not fit. They are imbecile or worse. The villains know it, and, having the lawyers for their friends, they contrive to escape on straw bail delays, or some technical plea or other. The people formed vigilance committees and execute justice, law or no law. We shall have better officers soon.

When I commenced this I did not expect to write so much, as I was tired, but, as usual, my pen ran away with me. Hereafter direct all letters to Stockton, Cal. Our expresses have some trouble with the Postmaster at San Francisco or rather with the p.m.'s son—for the p.m. has gone to visit his family east & left the office in charge of his son, and the younger don't know what he is about. I can

easily go to Stockton (70 miles) in a day by stage—but I suppose the expresses will always be able to take out the letters. The express rates from that place are but half of those to San F—. I do hope the cholera will not spread and that you will all live through the danger. I will write you again soon and as you wish. My love to all, especially to the children.

Affectionately,

Edmund

Gold dust does not sell at \$18 per oz. now. It is over \$17.00—somewhere near \$17.70 per ounce. You can sell at the N. Y. or N. Orleans price. Accustomed as I am to see men every day throw away their money, as so much trash, it is a little amusing to hear of the anxiety to save a few cents on an ounce.

**Sonora, Cal. Sept. 28th, '51.**

Dear Mary Ann

It is Sunday afternoon, and my last chance of writing by the next steamer. My last to you was by the Steamer of Sept. 1st in answer to yours of June.

43

I have for some time past been doing tolerably well—carting dirt to water and washing it, having spent about a hundred dollars in carting. About ten days ago, being in bad health, as I have been for three weeks, I started for Stockton, intending to go to Moquelumne Hill. While at Stockton I met acquaintances from different mines and after three days returned to Sonora, being certain that Sonora and the region around are as good as anywhere. While at Stockton, I placed in the hands of Reynolds & Co. \$200. wherewith to procure a draft on Adams & Co. and send you. You will doubtless receive it with this. As I said before, do as you please about buying land and building on it. But as five acres is not sufficient for a farm you better enlarge it by buying next to what you have bought.

I hope you will adopt the Bloomer costume and that all will and cease to carry 40 pounds of petticoats apiece. I expect a letter from you by the sixth or eighth of Oct. and for the present will close. My love to all,

Yours affectionately,

Edmund.

**For Thomas Sonora, Cal. Sept. 28th, 1851.**

My Dear Son,

For the first time I write to you directly and I hope you will write to me as often as your Mother does. I wish you to write just as you would talk if I were at home and we were together. You can tell me many things such as how our friends and neighbors are, how Anamosa and Fairview are growing, how the crops of corn, wheat, potatoes, etc., turn out. I am sorry to see in the New York Tribune an extract from the Dubuque Herald saying that the crops in the northern part of Iowa are an almost total failure, owing to the heavy rains of June. I hope it is an exaggeration.

I send a dollar to Harriet and a ten-dollar piece to get you "Bancroft's History of the United States." It is by far the best of the kind. Bancroft is yet alive and is personally known to me. He was formerly a schoolmaster in Northampton, Mass., then Secretary of the Navy of the United States and afterwards minister to the Court of St. James (London). It was while he was a schoolmaster and secretary and minister that he wrote his history and the best in the language.

You will in this work learn as much as I have learned by reading many volumes by many authors. Preserve the work with care. It is in a pure and pleasant style and you will wish often to read all or portions of it in years to come. It is best present I can make you at your age. It is necessary you should know the history of your own country, of what it has been, what it is now; and from this you can form some idea of what it will be. Also you can learn what was our great and good Washington and other men before, during and since his time. We shall have many such men yet.

You are growing into manhood and will have your part to act on the stage of life. Every man can be useful to his race as they have been. You may or may not be as useful as they. It will depend on yourself. But whatever you may be or do, be ready to do the best. Study. Strengthen your body and mind by working both. Help your mother whenever you can. You are of an age to be in some measure useful.

You will probably live to see a better state of things than the present. The world is always progressing. Man is always improving; discoveries in the laws of nature, and consequent increase in the happiness of man are almost daily taking place.

When you are in trouble do not despair. Evil is never lasting. Good remains forever and there is always hope. Be a good boy and you are almost certain to be a good man. My wish is to see you a whole man—not half a man or a fragment of a man as are many I have seen. A whole man is he who is guided by truth, justice, humanity and intellect—the whole combined.

As you grow older you will gradually become aware of the fact that there are such men in the world. It is not as bad as it seems. Its evils, of which so many surround us, result not so much from evil disposition as from ignorance. This ignorance cannot remain because it is man's nature to seek and obtain light. I wish I could be with you all, and I hope to return home next summer. Be good and kind to your mother and your little sister. I am compelled to close abruptly and put this in the express office for morning departure.

Your most affectionate father.

**Sonora, Cal. Oct. 5th, 1851.**

Dear Mary Ann

The mail steamer of Oct. 1st from San Francisco carried you a draft from Adams & Co. on the same house in New York for two hundred dollars. Today I received the duplicate; and if you do not receive the first I will send you the second. I wrote you by that steamer.

It is Sunday and the streets are thronged with men of every nation under heaven. Among others is a good number of the Celestials (Chinese) with their long pigtailed and themselves moon-eyed and flat-faced.

In my last I sent \$10 to procure Thomas "Bancroft's History of the United States" and I hope it will be obtained. It is of importance to his education. Make every effort to obtain it. It can be done if the matter is placed in the hands of an intelligent man. I addressed a note to Mr. Skinner for that purpose. Also sent a gold dollar for Harriet. I would send Harriet some children's books, but none are to be had here.

Our advices from the Emigrants via the South Pass are very favorable in the main. The Pawnees have caused some loss and trouble as you doubtless know. The Utah (or Humboldt River) Indians and the Shoshones on the Oregon route (via Fort Hall) have done some mischief as usual. A monthly mail has been in operation since May 1st between Sacramento & the City of the Salt Lake. Twice in that time the Utahs have compelled its return from the Humboldt to Carson River for a larger force, the usual number being about ten.

During the past summer, the number of emigrants being small, the Indians have been more emboldened. If any of our neighbors come next season they should, while in the Pawnee country and likewise in the whole distance between Bear River & Carson's river, travel in companies strong enough.

California now wants not miners so much as families to form a permanent settled population. Were it not for the distance, deserts & Indians, this country would settle with farmers ten times as fast as Iowa. At least such is my fixed opinion. It (Calif.) is certainly in health & climate alone worth twenty Iowas.\* Tell me if any of our neighbors are calculating on a removal next Spring. I would rather buy in Cal. Since it has become a State those who hold under Mexican grants are ready to sell to avoid taxation on so many square leagues of land.

But for what his opinion was little more than a year earlier, see page 29.



In my last letter which contained a \$10 piece, I forgot to say the coin was Moffatt & Co.'s, as you will see by looking for the word "Liberty" on the head of the goddess. I was not aware of the fact till just before placing it in the letter. And then it was too late to look for another. Moffatt's coins (they coin \$50 pieces) are taken by the government, in payment for duties, at the mint at their marked value—and pass here freely and without question.

It may go for a few cents on the dollar less in Picayunedom.\* Time was when Moffatt's was rec'd with distrust, & at a discount, but the last Congress (or last session) established an assay office in San F— and the President appointed an assayer who is connected with Moffatt & Co., thus rendering the coin equal to that of the N. G. S.\* All others have been rejected and none in the market. And now for the present—

Perhaps New Orleans, where the newspaper, the Picayune, was published.  
National Gold Standard.

Goodbye,

Edmund.

45

P.S. If you were all here—Mother, Henry, Hannah, etc.—I should not feel the smallest inclination to return to Iowa. My object would be to obtain a farm in the Napa Valley on the north side of the Bay near Vallejo. It is there perpetual summer. Even here in the mountains, in spite of frost & snow, gardens have been kept in constant cultivation. Full-grown turnips, lettuce, radishes, beets, etc., are on table daily. The frosts of Cal. seem to have no effect on vegetation.

I have written all this time in the Express Office at the Justice's desk. Men constantly in. There is a crowd at the express office. The bar keeper dealing out liquor occasionally on my right. Two men, sitting at a table opposite me, reading papers—and two others, playing billiards, on my left.

**Anamosa, October 19th, 1851**

Dear Husband

I thank God that you are still well. I got yours of Aug. 29th, arrived here last Monday. I could not answer it immediately. I shall be very happy to live in our own home as heaven. My brother George came here two weeks. He tries to assist me about my house and fence around it, so you will be surprised that he presented me 21 yards carpet and a little parlour stove and piece of sheet iron to put under it. The carpet is beautiful figures which is enough to cover my large room 13 by 16 feet and under two bedrooms, one 8 by 8 & other 7 by 8 feet in my house. It will make my room much warmer and more comfortable for the winter.

He is gone to Dubuque now. I sent twenty seven dollars by him to buy cooking stove, table, mackerel (a keg), etc., for me. He will be here in a few days and will assist me again about my house. My kitchen is 8 by 22 feet, in which will have pantry. Our house will be finished in two weeks, before next month, when I shall move and live in it. I shall bring my children up better.

Harriet is fat and healthy. Thomas is also. We have not had miniatures yet, for I have no money to go to Dubuque. I am alone in the garret while I am writing this but now Harriet just comes in and sees me writing. She can talk by signs with me as well as any mutes.\* She has not gone to school at all this winter, but she will begin to go to school next spring. She will be four years old in June 17. I believe you remember it. She always talks about apples which you will send her by and by before she goes to bed every night ever since. Now, I laugh at her, because she keeps talking about apples you will come back and give her by and by.

The children spoke with their mother by sign language, but they themselves had normal speech and hearing.

I again warn you how to be careful about your gold when you are coming home. You must be watchful about your trunk in which contains money. The people in New Orleans are waiting and watching everybody from California to steal their trunks and money. Old Joslin lost 200 dollars, while he changed gold for money. He did not know who stole it. You know that the people in the city are cunning to steal money from the Californians. I shall make George to write to you how he has seen the people to steal—he said that you must not look off from your trunk a minute and that

you must sit on it or sleep on it all time while you are on the shore in New Orleans. You must be careful when you go and change gold for money, you must be also watchful, while the officer is weighing gold. If you look off a minute he will steal half.

If George will be in New Orleans again before you are coming home, you must first go and see him, before you will go to the office to change gold for money. He knows about them well. You must also be careful about gold or money while you are in the steam boat. I think best that you put gold or money in leather belt around your body. If you sleep soundly somebody may steal it off. I often heard that almost every Californian lost their money when they are on their way for home.

I forgot to tell you that I sold gold dust to a peddler. He gave me 39 dollars and 90 cents. I do not know how much Old Joslin's folks and others made money. They generally keep secrets for being afraid to be robbed.

46

I hope that you will be with us before next spring. You are my best friend in the world. If you die, I shall also die. You must be careful about your life. When you arrive this town you must first come and see me. The driver knows where we live; you can ask him to stop at my house first. When his stage passes by my house, I shall look for you when you are on your way for home. I shall be ready to welcome you to a heavenly and happy home. We shall live comfortably in our new house.

I rejoice to read a private note from you. I have no money to buy apples and luxuries for our children now. Do you please write me private letters often, your folks dare not break my letters if I am in Anamosa. I wish I could go and see you in California. Thomas sends his love to you.

Your affectionate wife

Mary Ann

**For Thomas Sonora, Cal. Dec. 4th, 1851.**

My dear Son

It is a rainy day, cloudy and dull and not one to enliven a man's spirits, and my letter may be as sombre as the weather. But after today, I expect to be at some miles distant from Sonora with small chance of sending letters except when I come in occasionally.

By the steamer of Oct. 1st I sent a draft to your mother of \$200. Also [to] Harriet a gold dollar and you a ten-dollar (gold) coin to procure for you "Bancroft's History of the United States." You must have it, cost what it will. I would rather leave you a good education and, in short, a complete manhood—instead of that puny thing, a half man—than ten thousand acres. The latter no doubt are useful but it is whether one is a man or a half man that gives them the value.

The rainy season opened on the 8th of Nov. We have had several rains since, but never a good, heavy, pouring rain. Enough fell to run long toms in the large gulches, but not enough for the ravines. I dug a large quantity of dirt and finished washing it day before yesterday—in ten and a half days washed out two hundred and forty dollars. Paid thirty dollars for carting the dirt a half mile to water. The largest amount I made in a day was fifty-two dollars. Tomorrow, should it not rain, I go to Columbia, five miles north of Sonora, and shall prospect among the hills and valleys in that neighborhood. It may occupy several days, but I shall find a place worth digging somewhere. At a distance from Sonora I shall have less chance of sending papers home. But when I expect letters, I can either send for them or, what is more probable, come down myself. A stage runs twice daily between Sonora and Columbia.

We have papers from New York by the Nicaragua route of Oct. 22d. They came several days ago. The mail of same date went by the Panama Route and has not arrived. It has been expected in San Francisco for some days and it is feared that the "Falcon" (steamer which brought it from New York) is lost. The "Golden Gate" had waited at Panama eight days beyond the time; and finally she left, leaving the "Carolina" to wait for the "Falcon's" mail. I am thus particular, because if the Falcon is really lost, it may be understood that any letters sent me by that steamer (leaving N.Y. on the 22d Oct.) must be lost with her.

Doubtless you will wish to know how I kept Thanksgiving. It was Thanksgiving here on the same day as in all the other states, and I kept it, as most others did, by keeping at work. A man who comes to Cal. is very much like a sailor who goes on a three years' whaling voyage. He has no family, no relations around him. He must eat his Thanksgiving dinner with chance friends or alone.

And, by the way, I will just intimate that you will find in the "Stockton Journal" of Dec. 1st, which I mailed for your mother a day or two since, a more truthful account of the yield of the mines and more honest advice to those at home who are thinking of coming to Cal. than can often be found in the Cal. papers in general. No man who has a family should come unless he brings his family and in 47 that case he should go to farming in the valleys around the Bay; San Jose and Napa Valleys, I think, are preferable. But no man will prosper here, or anywhere under heaven, unless he works, and avoids gambling & dissipation.

I hope Danforth will not come. He is not old enough, nor accustomed to severe labor. If he wishes to know what mining is, let him take a pick & shovel and go and excavate into the mass of red sand, clay, rocks & stones where the Military road leads up hill south of Reed's Mill. A mass hard as brick when hot & slippery as ice when wet. If, after a week's continuous labor, from sunrise to sunset, stopping an hour each day for dinner, he does not complain of aching back & weary limbs and feel his spirits most confoundedly stupid, then perhaps he will be fit for Cal.

I say perhaps because the worst is not told, and that is the thousand disappointments to which every man here is liable, the weariness of body, depression of spirits and the absence of all the soothing influences of home are very apt to lead to the bottle, and to gambling. Every day I see some one or more maudlin or dead drunk or going through the process of delirium tremens. Such cases are common and excite very little notice—but the great majority of the people are more temperate....

**Sonora, Dec. 5, '51.**

I resume the pen to finish this letter. The "Falcon's" mail has arrived in San Francisco. She is therefore safe. Papers of date (N. Y.) 25th Oct came in last night—but not letters. They will come

in a day or two if not tonight. Over 60,000 letters arrived at San F— by the steamer just in—so the San F— papers say.

I perceive that the Post Master General has issued a general request in the public papers to letter writers to desist from the practice of using sealing wax on their letters to Cal. Such notice has been given time and again; but still there are plenty of stolid blockheads and elegant ninnies who adhere to the practice. Sealing wax melts in the tropics (on and near the Isthmus) and sticks to its neighbor—and thus on the arrival in San F— letters are found adhering together. In separating them, the direction is often destroyed. Probably letters for me have been lost in that way. In sending me letters, seal up the letter and direct it. Then enclose that in an envelope and direct also. I may still have a chance of receiving it.

We are likely to have Indian troubles in the Southern portion of Cal. I hope no fears will be entertained about me. They are far south of my position. I sent you in a late paper a rough map of the mining region on the tributaries of the San Joaquin. They expect trouble south of the Mercedes (look for it on the map) on account of the provisions not being promptly furnished the Indians as per treaty. The fault is with our loco poco congress. They went beyond economy & became parsimonious.

These Indians, by the way, are a rather ugly-looking race—the men with heavy features in general, the women very ugly and many of them frightful—horribly so. In truth they are the most indescribable specimens of ugliness I ever met. These Indians in the mountains are, intellectually, far below those in the plains.

In a late letter I said watermelons were 75¢. A short time after, I was passing a Mexican unloading melons from a wagon. I pointed to one that you would call of fair size, and asked the price. He held up two fingers. I asked reals (bits)? He nodded. Thinking he misunderstood me or I him, I pulled out a quarter. He shook his head. Then I said pesos (dollars). He nodded. The only watermelon I ever purchased in Cal. was during my journey in Sept. to Stockton, when stopping at a watermelon patch I obtained one for three bits—it was the size of your two fists.

Watermelons, together with cucumbers, lettuce, muskmelons, green corn, etc., have been in the Sonora market until a week ago; and are still daily fresh from the garden in San F— and other towns on the Bay, and such continues the case the year round. I have seen a cabbage here weighing (the head alone) thirty-six pounds—and what think you of a potato thirty-three inches in circumference? Measure your head and see.

It is now known that, on the emigrant route between the “Steeple Rocks” near the head of Goose Creek (a branch of Lewis' Fork of the Columbia River) and the 48 Sierra Nevada, thirty-two persons have been killed by the Indians during last summer's emigration. As the emigration next summer will probably be large, those who come must travel either in large parties or keep the trains in sight of each other and be well armed.

The Indians are more familiar with the whites than in 1849 and are more bold; and the Snake Indians (Shoshones) are supplied with the best and fleetest of horses. On the Oregon route many of the emigrants were robbed of their stock by the Shoshones and men, women & children were compelled to travel on foot five or six hundred miles. As usual, traders & land speculators persuaded many to take that route by representing that the Indians of the Humboldt were hostile. They tried that game on us in '49 without success, representing that the grass was burnt and our animals would starve.

It has been raining today—there is abundance of water now—the sky is clearing and tomorrow morning I go with others to Columbia and probably beyond—I have been there before but it was then dry. In the Sonora Herald for the steamer of Dec. 1st you will see an account of the region of which I am speaking.

I suppose you are now in winter weather, and attending school. Study well but not to excess—children are sometimes injured by excessive study....

In writing this to you, I write to all. I have a book, “The Countess of Rudolstadt”—a sequel to “Consuela.” When through, I will send it to your mother. She will understand....

From your affectionate father,

E. Booth

**Sonora, Cal. Dec. 7th, '51.**

Dear Mary Ann

I yesterday mailed a couple of letters—in one envelope, for you. The weather was not favorable for my contemplated trip to Columbia; and today is Sunday. Thus I have been in forced idleness three days and this is the fourth. The weather is now mild, warm and sunny as a Sunday ought to be; and, as nothing is so hard to do as to do nothing, I will write a little more. Here in California, away from home and those we love, idleness is a most intolerably tiresome kind of labor. One must read or seek amusement or dissipation, or go to work, or else go and hang himself, and this is no fancy. Except on Sundays or when it rains, I do not pass a single day in idleness, and, keeping head and hands busy, time passes rapidly.

I have been to the Express office this morning. The letters by last steamer—such as were directed to San F— & Stockton—have not yet come, but may tonight. A daily mail runs between those places and Sonora; and, as I am now almost certain of remaining near Sonora during the remainder of my stay in this country, I wish you to direct hereafter all letters to “Sonora, California” and to no other office whatever. Even should I go any distance I can still get them, as the sudden mulishness of the postmasters, consequent on a new law, has given way to necessity.

Does the “Home Journal” still come? I have seen it frequently during the past year and do not like it. It is much inferior to what I thought. If it still comes, you better tell the postmaster to stop it. I do not know what is due for the papers. I had paid in advance but do not remember how much. It is about eighteen months since. I think I will send for the “New York American Illustrated News” for the children. I would send for the New York Weekly Tribune, but you do not much like it, and



Thomas, I believe, is not yet old enough to understand the topics on which it is wont to treat. Topics which, under the general name of “ismx,” constitute the bug-bear of fools.

The San F— papers which arrived yesterday speak of a beet brought to that city from Santa Clara County (in which is the San Jose Valley) measuring 4 feet 3 inches in length and 18 inches in circumference at the top & tapering regularly to the other end—a respectable back log—but let Thomas mark out its figure on the wall. Eighteen inches in circumference is six inches in diameter.

49

If I had not a relish for reading, I should be as wretched as are many others who, to relieve themselves, plunge into vice. A bull & bear fight comes off today. Such takes place almost every Sunday. I have visited none and never will. It is vulgar and brutish.

The town as usual on Sunday is full of miners. They have a call for an “Indignation Meeting” of miners this afternoon because the city council forbid digging for gold on city lots—a line stretched across the street & the notice in large capitals attached. I suppose it will end quietly.

Edmund.

**Private. Chili Camp Dec. 21, 1851**

Dear Mary Ann

This is for yourself alone—not for others. I have just filled a sheet for them in common with you; and now I will have some private talk....

I am sorry for your troubles but patience. I require and use more patience here than ever I did at home. I do believe that my coming to Cal. has been beneficial. I have now sent home over \$500. and shall probably send more when I go to Sonora.

Do not let the follies of others (neighbors) trouble your mind. It is only a crazy vanity on their part that excites their ill humor. I never heed such persons and I have seen many of them.

I am very sorry that Thomas is troublesome. He has much natural energy, and it works of course. It is the case with all strong and healthy children. You must have a garden by our house next spring and Thomas must plant and hoe and weed it. It will enable him to work his energies to good purpose. He will be learning to work, and will direct his mind and strength to something useful; and with you and Harriet, and perhaps with me also, will enjoy the fruits of his labor. A garden does not require constant labor except for a few days.

I hope to return home next summer. I cannot now say whether it will be early or late in the summer. You recollect that I lost the first year entirely. Had I known more of mining, I should not have lost it. I am anxious to return. Home is a heaven compared to the hard, lonely life I lead here. No day ever passes but I think of you and the children and Mother several times every hour....

I have met with many disappointments in this country but that is the fate of nearly all; and, as you know, I have a large organ of firmness. I do not allow myself to be overcome by discouragement. A resolute will and determined energy are necessary here and fortunately I possess them in a good measure.

I use very little medicine of any kind. The climate is remarkably healthy and you need have no fears of my dying. I have none; but I wish for the Mandrake pills that, in case I should have fever & ague, I can cure it immediately. I have two boxes of those pills yet.

You must make your house as comfortable and pleasant as you can. It will have a great effect on the children. A pleasant home makes pleasant children. Make them love their home.

I hope you have got or will get Bancroft's History of the U. S. for Thomas. It is the best book I can give him at his age. It will cost several dollars but that will be no loss. The advantage to him will be great. Its style is of the very best; and, by reading it often and for several years, he will become acquainted not only with the facts of our history, but also with the best style of speaking and writing. Keep that book with care. Do not lend it. Keep it in your drawer. Thomas may not feel

inclined to read much of it at a time, as he is young—but it is the best history ever written. It would carry away a bronze medal at the Great Exhibition in London.

I wish Thomas was more obedient, but have some patience. He must cut wood and do other things about the house this winter. I hope you will have a stable for the cow & heifer and a good one.

50

Gold now sells in Sonora at \$16.75 cts. per ounce and in San Francisco at \$17.25 cts. It is probable that, when I return home, I shall sell all my gold in San F— for drafts. If they should be stolen on the way, I can stop payment as soon as I arrive in N. York or N. Orleans, and thus I should lose nothing.

It is not probable that I shall have a trunk before I reach the Atlantic Coast. I have none now—only my old carpet bag which contains the tin boxes of medicine, four shirts, a pair of pants, and a very few trifles—only half full. It serves for my pillow at night. I have five blankets—one is the large coarse blanket & another your patched quilt. Both are nearly worn out. I have not slept in sheets for a very long time.

Harriet must not go to school before she is five years old. Much mischief is often done to children by forcing the brain—and by confining them to one position on a bench all day. Their bones are growing and they need play and free action....

Enjoy life as well as you can. Read books—novels, etc. I would send you more but books here are costly—being double the New York price—and have been four times as high. I sent you a Texas paper containing a letter from Judge Barry of Sonora. I wish that the truth should be known at home to prevent others coming who are not fit for Cal. Judge Barry is a man of sense, a friend of mine, and in his letter writes the truth.

I have not been in the practice of writing private letters to you because, until lately, I supposed others would take them from the p.o. and I never like private matters to be turned into public tattle by silly gossips whose heads are mere rattleboxes of scandal. Tell the post master (if you have not)

not to let others except Thomas take out your letters & tell Thomas to allow no one but you to have them. I read your letters eight or ten times last night and have read them five or six times today....

I wear long boots, which come up to my knees, and the days are rarely cold—my coat is always off when at work. The evenings are cool—often cold.

Thomas—You must be a good boy. Help your mother and Harriet kindly when you can, and be obedient. Do not swear nor talk bad language. It is not necessary and is very vulgar. Listen to good men and men of sense—such as Mr. Skinner and Mr. Wright and others. Learn to speak good language, not low and vulgar. Bancroft's History of the United States is a good model for speech and writing. That is one reason why I wish you to have it. You will soon be a man and will be strong. Make your strength useful.—Your father.

I have sent pictures to Thomas & Harriet. Let them nail the pictures on the wall in one of the bedrooms—also the map. By seeing often for months they will remember. My love to you, Thomas, Harriet, Mother, etc. Goodbye,

Affectionately,

Edmund.

**Private Chili Camp, Tuolumne Co., California Jan. 21, 1852.**

My Dear Wife

Your letter of Nov. 17th was brought to me from Sonora last night by Mr. Buck, one of my partners. I was most heartily glad to receive it and equally glad to hear that at last you and the children are in your own house and living by yourselves and so comfortably. I hope you and they will continue to live pleasantly and comfortably. We do not fully know the value of a home till we leave it.

Everything that tells me of home is intensely interesting; and I hope to be there next summer. It is not probable that I shall be rich, but my coming will have done some good in enabling us to live more easy and comfortably. You need not feel any concern about what others say in regard to my not being able to come home. It is all folly. Your statements about others who return with nothing make me laugh, but it is in the nature of the thing; for gold digging is much like lead digging—uncertain. I can find gold in a thousand places within a mile, but in few cases would it be rich 51 enough to pay for digging. I have made but little in the past two months. In Dec. rain most of the time, and prospecting took up the rest of the month. In January (this month) we worked while we had water, and joined a sluicing company—to wash with a sluice 500 feet long with a tom at the tail—but we had not sufficient water. A race has since been finished, five miles in length, to bring water from Sullivan's Gulch, but we cannot get it till another heavy rain.

Last night two more men joined our company, so we are four in all, the lawyer & Englishman having left us during the last rain to work their own claims at Yankee Hill. All my partners are from Boston. All came together around the “Horn”—arriving, when I did, in '49 after eight months' voyage. All are married. One has four children, one three and one has lost his only child.

The last is Dr. Tarbox, physician, surgeon & dentist—he has all his instruments about him—is college educated and son-in-law to Dr. Dodds, M. D., D. D. and LL. D.—no ridicule, but fact—the author of the “Philosophy of Mesmerism,” which I sent you last Sept. Dr. Tarbox will order up from San Francisco for me another work by his father-in-law, lectures delivered on Mesmerism at Washington City at the request of members of cabinet and congress. You see I have as usual friends & associates among the well educated and intelligent—that is one great satisfaction, for ignorance is a very dull bore.

In addition to the sluice company, we are in treaty for the purchase of three good claims together with a good wall-tent, table, furniture, provisions, tom, hose, etc., of two men. They ask \$400. Tomorrow we shall know; if we buy, we will wash out as much [gold] as we can when we have rain, and sell the rest in the spring. It has not rained this month and we ought to have rain soon.

On my last I wrote our long tom had gone down stream. It was never found and was probably destroyed among the rocks—it cost \$33.00. We got another for \$9.00 and when we have rain we shall probably run two toms if we buy tomorrow—hire men to help us, paying each man five dollars a day. We have sold our mule and cart and have some talk of buying another because the rain holds off so long. It costs as much to board a horse as to board three or four men. What we most want is frequent showers of rain all winter and spring....

I cannot give up the idea of removing you all at some future time to Cal. At present, things are too unsettled. This will not continue so forever. Gen. Wilson—well known in Dubuque, etc.—came here on a pleasure trip, and probably likewise from curiosity, and the wonderful climate took away his head. He has done what he would not do in regard to Iowa or Wisconsin, viz., made Cal. his permanent home. The President has since appointed him one of the three commissioners to settle land titles (under old Mexican and Spanish grants). Until that is done, people will be afraid to buy land of each other lest their titles prove false.

Thomas is a brave boy, but he must not use his courage rashly. He is not old enough and must not cut down trees yet. The danger is always great and requires the greatest caution. Many men (not boys) have been killed by the trees, which they were cutting, falling on them. He must be careful likewise not to cut his legs or feet when chopping wood. I am glad he helps you and is useful and obedient. Every man is made for some use; and he will find it more pleasant to be useful than to be otherwise. Let him help you cultivate the garden next spring and summer. I will give him a dollar for his biggest melon.

I hope you will keep in good heart & comfortable. Make home pleasant to the children that they may love their home. Use the money in the way you think best. Get fresh beef, etc., and salt it yourself; it is more healthy than pork, and much better for children—also dried apples, etc.

I will remain in this country six or ten months longer. I do wish it would rain. I could make twenty dollars a day if we had rain. We cannot haul the best dirt to water because the mountains are in the way. The gulches where is water are dug out. In a few years men will make but two or three dollars

a day except in quartz. I have an offer of a share in a quartz mine for \$50—good but no machinery to work it. May accept it; think I shall and afterwards sell again.

52

**Sonora, Cal. Feb. 15, 1852**

Dear Mary Ann

Above you have a picture of San Francisco as it is now; also of the bay, shipping, Yerba Buena Island, Telegraph Hill, the mountains of the Coast Range north of the Bay, etc. On the left the Bay continues on to the “Golden Gate” and on the right to the mouths of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. Cut out the picture and let Thomas wafer it to the wall of his bedroom.

I can write but little now for I wish to return to Chili Camp and get some sleep this afternoon in order to work all night. Our water, which is brought by means of a race from Sullivan's Gulch several miles, is very irregular. We have a better chance of it during the night than day, because the hundreds of miners along the race all want it during the day and hence we at the tail end of the race must get what comes. When we have water I make from five to eight dollars per day. We do not always have it even at night and it causes much loss of time and also vexation.

In a week or so I intend to go to Yankee Hill up Wood's Creek above Sonora where I have a claim. By that time a race will be ready to bring water from a small creek—and, in two weeks after, the “Big Ditch” to bring water from the Stanislaus River is expected to be finished. It was commenced last June and has cost over a hundred thousand dollars thus far....

Love to all,

Edmund.

**[Undated; presumably February 16, 1852]**

My dear Father

I am glad to hear from you again. I should like to go to California very well. If I once get there I don't think that I would ever come back again if I got rich. Mr. Skinner sent to St. Louis to get Bancroft's History of the United States. I expect it in two or three weeks. I write a few lines then I go to my work and work a little while then I come in again. I go on in that way until I finish my letter then after my supper or any other meals I read until I get sleepy then I go and lay on the lounge in a few minutes I fall asleep after I sleep awhile my mother awakes me then I go to bed I sleep all night when morning comes Mother calls me to make the fire I have not cut my feet or legs you need not be afraid that I will cut me if I get along this way all of my life it will be more than some people can do. I must finish my letter tonight because it must go away tomorrow morning I must take them to the postoffice tonight I set here writing while Harriet is trying to make dolls out of paper and Mother is getting supper. There is no school now because that the scholars won't go but a few—so the school is broken up.

Your affectionate Thomas.

**Anamosa, March 25th, 1852**

My dear husband

Mr. Skinner brought and handed your letter of January 21st to me last Thursday evening. I unfolded it and read it, while he sat down and read your books, waiting till I read it through, and let him read one of your two letters, but I did not let him read another private letter; but he appeared that he wished to read all of my letters, because he asked me if you were well and doing well, and when you were coming back home, etc.

There are fifty bushels of oats in our old field to be ready for me. I shall get some body to go after my oats here soon. I believe that I shall sell them to the merchants in this town, but I must wait, till one bushel will cost 20 or 25 cents, and now it costs 15 cents. I wrote last that Mr. Robert was going to rent our old field this spring. We had no stable for our cattle last winter, for there was no lumber at the mills. I have not had a kitchen up yet, but I expect it up soon. Henry begun to haul 53



his lumber at his house today, and is going to build large one to join his house near ours, about 20 or 30 rods from my house. They expect to remove next month. Our cattle stood through the winter very well. I expect that our old cow will have a calf every day.

I should like to go to Cal. if you cannot give up the idea of removing us all there some time. Which way we shall go over the land or by the water, if you determine to have us go to California you must get money enough to travel well and comfortably. The California emigrants continue to pass by our house every week. There are many families who have three or five teams for each family. I hardly think that I can leave my first comfortable home that I ever had and go to Cal. to live in a hut or worse house again, but I hated to live here for the coldest winter that I ever lived in Iowa.

Is there any fruits in California? Can orchard rise there? Is there timber enough to burn for the fire and to saw lumber for the frame houses? If you decide to have us all to go there, you must enter some timber land, before the great many emigrants arrive there. Most of them are carpenters and cabinet makers. If you get one good house as mine, I shall be very glad to go there for health and climate. Thomas wishes very much that he can go there this spring, and thinks that he can get rich himself to dig gold.

My wish that you should be rich, for I wish that we shall be sure to live easy, and comfortably; therefore we shall be happier. I fear that you can hardly get rich [at] once, for it must keep you away from us and home so long. I do not like it. You say that there are plenty of gold on the surface of California. Why dont you get it and do try to get it luckily once and return home or send money us to go there for a permanent home to raise more children for I am tired to have only two children. I wish that I had six or ten children now. You know that I love children more than all gold. You will laugh at me about raising more children but I can not help it, for I love baby, as little girls love their dolls.

Dont work on the Sunday at all, not set up to read too much till the midnight, for I am afraid that your health will be destroyed. You must particularly rest yourself on Sunday and go to bed early as any body does, for I wish that you are keeping strong and healthy. Dont waste your tools by

washing away by the streams, nor expense money too much to buy other tools. Do you think that I am scolding at you? No, not at all, but I only wish that you shall save every cent and save time to get money to return home quickly.

I am jealous of Clough, \* I wish that it was you. If you had \$20,000 like him you would be on your way for home now. I am very sorry that you can not get water enough to wash dirt out of gold dust. If we move there how can we get water enough to cook and wash our clothes? I often wish that a clairvoyant would tell you where gold is immense to take out [at] once. I believe that we shall better go to California than staying in Iowa which is good for nothing for us to live for. If we dont go there we can not get money enough here, but we must be obliged to work to live. I had a great deal idea of going there, before I received your last letters. If we can go through very well and safely.

None of the letters tells what became of Clough. In a later statement Thomas said he wondered why his father never told them, if he knew.

I will send your letter to George in Dubuque about gold quartz, by mailing it. He was here last Feb. and told me that he was pretty nearly drowned in the Mississippi River. He rode in his sleigh on the ice many hundred miles and then he was coming up back about half way to Dubuque. His horse went through the ice with his sleigh. Geo. tried to save his money in his carpet bag in the sleigh and tried to escape. He caught the edge of ice and he threw the bag out on the ice and then he got out himself. His horse was drowned and [he] bought another horse and he rode on horse back on the land to Dubuque, you see he narrow escaped.

Your affectionate wife,

Mary Ann.

54

**Private Sonora, Cal. April 10, 1852**

My dear wife....

My last to you was in February. I returned to Chili Camp but found the water insufficient and it soon stopped. After two days I returned to Sonora and joined a company then being formed (of 4 men) and am now fully engaged in digging but shall make nothing for a week. We are opening the ground—or as they call it stripping.

I may pocket ten thousand from it & may not one hundred. It is uncertain like all other places until we are near the bottom. The claim below us at the distance of 15 rods paid last summer \$20 to \$40 to each man per day, but only by deep digging. At present these claims cannot be dug deep because of water. We expect to dig 40 feet deep. The rainy season is so far over that we are having a pump, 40 ft. long, constructed. The place is ready for it. . . .

In regard to the well, I think it ought to be deep; and if possible near the back part of the house where we can cover it with a roof if we wish. It ought to be done by contract and the person who takes the job should do it faithfully or not be paid. I do not know where you have built the house, and of course do not know about the ground and what depth it will probably require, nor whether water can be reached without going through a layer of rock. The wall should be eighteen inches thick at least and must be flat stone. Round stones are perfectly useless in a well. If built of round stones, I shall be obliged to take them all up or dig a new one.

I will write to our friend Skinner on this subject as soon as I receive his letter, for which I have sent to Stockton by the Express. Hereafter direct all letters for me to Sonora. I had no idea that Emily was married. It is all the better that she has married a man of education and intelligence—for such I take him to be. Under such circumstances, if swayed by the higher feelings, happiness is greatly increased. What a purgatory I have had to go through with the ignoramuses!—people with many notions, a little matter-of-fact knowledge and no ideas.

You need not fear that I shall be murdered or robbed. I keep my gold in Reynolds, Todd & Co.'s iron safe. They are bankers like Adams & Co. and others, and are good friends of mine, and so they have been since I came to Sonora. Many murders & robberies have taken place in this state, as you

see by the papers, & many more will take place, but such cases are very rare in Sonora, and besides the State is very large—large enough for three large States.

In Cal. I have seen Malays from Asia and Arabs from Arabia, who were drawn to this country by the gold mines. One thousand Chinese have arrived at San Francisco during the past two weeks and we have reports of two thousand more being on the way. Three thousand Americans are on the Isthmus, and I suppose fifty thousand will cross the deserts this summer. In all, probably we shall have a hundred and fifty thousand added to the population of the State during the coming eight months. It is a madness allied to the bank, town-lot and wild land fever of 1835, '36, & '37—and the mulberry fever of 1848-'49. It will cure itself by ruining thousands; but will at the same time settle the State with permanent families, and that is the chief good.

**Sonora, Cal. April 24, 1852.**

My dear Wife

Your letter of Feb. 16th I received last week on Friday (16th), two months from home this time. As is always the case I was glad to get it. I did not answer it immediately because no answer could go from San Francisco until May 1st and because I wished to obtain Skinner's letter first—I have sent to Stockton three times for it. On the third time I wrote a note to Reynolds, Todd & Co. to look at the back lists of letters for it. Probably I shall have their answer tomorrow (Sunday). If the letter does not come I will write to Skinner. But I am sorry to lose it. Thomas' letter came in yours. He improves and acquires facility in expressing his ideas on paper, and I was gratified with it as well as with what he told me of Harriet and other matters.

55

We have dug thirty feet into the east bank of Wood's Creek, and we are on a part of the old bed of the stream, as is shown by the rolled stones which lie so thickly together that every inch of our way has to be made with the pick (pickaxe). We wash but little of it and that pays four or five dollars a day to the hand. Much that we dig pays nothing.

Our great object is to reach the ledge or old bed rock of the stream where it ran ages ago. This cannot be done until June when the water in the hills shall have run off or dried so that it will not come into our hole nearly as fast as we can pump it out. At the second claim below us they have a horse pump. After working it three days and nights they abandoned the work until June. The water run in at the rate of a barrel a minute.

I think our claim a good one, but cannot know till we go deeper. It is large enough for a year's work—but I do not intend to stay so long. Still I will not go home until I get enough. You must have patience and resolution and wait.

Too many people are coming this summer. Cal. can support millions but not now. This rush is all wrong. The land is not brought into cultivation. The placer diggings that will pay are nearly all claimed by men working them. Quartz mining, as understood at the east, is humbug. Very few such mines pay for working. The reason is that no machinery fit for it has been invented. An avalanche of people—men, women, & children, came in just as the rainy season commenced. What will they do? I pity them.

However, there is some bright spot in every dark picture. The Americans are an extreme race (or a race of extremes might be more proper), at once money-getting and extravagant, rich today and poor tomorrow, elated with hope and dashed with disappointment; as the majority of those moving west will be for four or five months next winter. Then, after having time to see and hear and cogitate to their heart's content, those who bring families will push for the agricultural lands, and thus a broad and permanent foundation will be laid for the prosperity of the State; and then, the sooner the mines are exhausted, the better.

Sunday P.M. I am now at Todd's Express Office and find that Skinner's letter has not come. The post master has just written a note to the p.m. at Stockton to look at the back list for Feb., March & April & forward it on.

Thomas must write me often. Let him write in his own way. I can easily read and understand him, and the ability of putting his thoughts to paper thus early is something. He will improve as he grows and practises. I hope he will cultivate the garden—he will learn something by it and especially that he is able to do something useful—I repeat that I will give him a dollar for his largest melon. Let him weigh it and tell me the weight.

My partners have just returned with a ham and other articles. One of them a Colt's revolver—a large one which he sleeps with. They have been firing it today at a mark. Many tents near us along the creek.

The evening is very cool, and in writing this I was obliged to go out twice to the fire to stop shivering. I have just brought in and put under the table a good mess of live coals in the bake kettle. The heat is very agreeable; feet cold. You must not wish yourself here for you would not like life in the mines. Will send tomorrow some of the many flowers that grow around me, in a newspaper.

Sunday p.m. It is now raining slightly and looks as if it will rain for some days. I did not rise this morning till eleven o'clock. I prepared breakfast and then the other lazy fellows got up, having first smoked their pipes for an hour.

Goodbye,

Edmund.

No. 2d. What long letters I write! I suppose none but yourself will read such long, wandering and, I might almost say, incoherent scribbling or rather scratching, for the steel pens so commonly used here are as much botheration as use.

The children are cheerful. Keep them so and growing by living well. Ha! Ha! Ha! An Indian—ugly fellow of about 30 or 35—has just come into the bar room where I am writing. He has nothing but his shirt on him, and the lady of the house—a really pleasant American lady—has gone. Now the savage has gone, and the lady has returned and is standing at the door. American ladies are

so scarce that the sight of one is always pleasant. The Indians, the ugliest in the continent, are so common that they excite no attention anywhere except among the newcomers.

I hope you will keep a pleasant home for the children. Thomas must not be made to feel dissatisfied with his home. Running over the world as I am doing is a hard and unsatisfactory kind of life. When he is a man, railroads will extend from Boston to San Francisco and Oregon—and everywhere else, except on the ocean. He will perhaps be able to travel more than I have done—but, while he is young, he must study and prepare to act his part as a man.

You will see by the papers that the overland emigrants are arriving. The route is as usual. Next winter you will see abundance of complaints of disappointment, etc., from these emigrants in the Eastern papers. You mention Old Webb, Old Brundage. If they are old men and have not the vigor and activity of middle life they should by all means stay at home. California is no place for men who cannot take care of themselves when away from family, friends and relations.

Today for the first time I learned of the death of Henry Clay on the 29th June last.

We (my messmate and myself) are waiting for sunset, when we start for Yankee Hill, each with a sack on his shoulder. It will then be more cool.

I hope you will have a stable for the cattle built before the ground is too hard to set up posts. It can be built of posts boarded round—split shingles, not shaved, will answer for roof. The animals can go into this at pleasure and be in shelter from the winter storms. But I must stop. My love to you all.

Affectionately,

Edmund.

**Anamosa, May 2, 1852.**

My dear Husband

I went down to town with Thomas on business. I did not expect any letter from you. I thought that I should have an opportunity to go into the PO to look for anything there for me from California. A clerk went to look for any letter and found a letter and handed it to me without expecting. Before we went out of the PO I was in a hurry in opening it, with hoping to hear some good news about getting much money and your coming back home, but I found nothing in it about your coming. I felt bad and rather sober, for you had had a bad fit of sickness. I do not understand, what kind is it?

Last Friday, Thomas and myself went to the town to buy a fish line for him in Mr. Metcalf's store. I was told by him that Mandrake pills came to Crockwell's store, so I went there to buy four boxes of Mandrake for you. I will enclose them in this letter. I confess that I do not like to send you these pills. I do not believe that they are good, for they are poisonous, for they are made of May apple's roots.

There are a great many emigrants for Oregon and California to settle passing by here. I saw many women and little children and ladies. They drove their ox teams with from five to seven yokes with each team and few horses and mule teams. They appeared respectable and rich folks. I confess that I almost cried to go with them too this spring.

Mr. Hakes' three boys and Olmstead's boy Stephen have gone together to Oregon. There are many folks in Anamosa talking of going to Oregon or California next Spring. Do come after us too with them. Do get money enough to buy ox team to travel comfortably. Be sure if you decide to remove, or not, but you must get money enough to live comfortably at home, so we can feel happy to live with good children at sweet home or in California....

I bought four apple trees last Friday. We shall make our garden handsome and nice this summer. I hope that you shall be at home at that time to see our garden. Dont 57 fail to come this year. If you dont come this year I must be given up and shall have no patience to wait for you longer. Thomas also feels impatient to wait for you longer. That he cannot go to school much, for he must plant our garden first. School will commence tomorrow, Monday—a minister will teach.



I received “Consuela” and the “Heir of West Wayland” and papers came safe. I can never read these books again, for I have no time to read, for I must piece calico and quilt four five quilts this summer—I have my old quilts worn out—and take care of my garden to keep weeding and cleaning.

Will you let me sell a new bull calf which Henry wants to buy? Almost everybody wants to buy for cash. I think best that I shall sell our old cow next fall or December for I am afraid that she is too old and will die now, but she is well. Grass is green now in the valley. Our heifer will have a calf next spring.

I always forget to tell you that Thomas and myself wrote and filled letter to you last Feb. or Jan. and directed it to Stockton, as you requested. I hope that you received it now.

Yesterday Henry went to Fairview after my oats from our field. My share 60 bushels of oats. I expect I shall sell some part of oats to Californians when passing by here. A bushel costs 20 cent or 25.

Your affectionate

Mary Ann

**Sonora, Cal. May 25, 1852.**

Dear Mary Ann

It is evening—a fine moonlight. I have just finished my supper, which I cooked myself at a fire back of the tents. I was about to send you more flowers. I kept them a week and they faded and looked so dark and ugly that I threw them away and concluded not to send more.

My prospects for the summer are very good. One day last week I and two others in company took thirty-four dollars. Last Saturday, thirty, and I believe we should have taken forty but the water failed by the middle of the afternoon. We shall not have water enough until next week when we shall be supplied by the “big ditch” from the Stanislaus River. You see in the Sonora Herald

accounts of the “Tuolumne Co. Water Company.” Their ditch or race is near fifteen miles long, and this claim which I have been working is at Yankee Hill, five miles up Wood's Creek from Sonora. I am now near Sonora—1 1/2 miles—and sinking a shaft (like a well) into the claim which five of us own here. If it does not pay well, I will sell it and go to Yankee Hill where the ground is higher and the air more cool.

My partner at Yankee Hill has shares in four claims. He works one and puts hired men on the rest. He owns a share in our claim here. We take care of his interest here and he does the same for us at Yankee Hill. He is a lawyer, and has had a college education; is very intelligent and enterprising.

I will answer your questions. In July or about the first of August we begin to have apples (a poor kind of apples), and, in the following months, we have pears, peaches (very poor peaches) & grapes (rich) which are raised at the old Spanish Missions in the southern part of Cal. Orchards are not plenty because the European race (Spaniards) had settled in but very few places until the Americans took the country. Many young orchards are now being planted and in a few years fruit will be abundant. Last summer I could never buy an apple or a pear as large as your fist nor an orange for less than twenty-five cents. Small apples & pears were a shilling or a dime each. Oranges are now a dime each and are very plenty in Sonora.

I do not wish to remove you to this state now if ever. The climate is good but the people very unsettled. Land titles are all in doubt, and [there are] many other evils. I would prefer to wait and let order come out of chaos. A few years will make a great change in the appearance of things. The climate will bring many thousands of good people whom gold would not draw away from their old homes.

58

I fear there will be some trouble about timber. It is plenty on the mountains but not on the plains or prairies, nor rivers so far as I have seen. In many places it will be necessary in a few years to use coal for fuel or have fire wood brought by railroad from the Sierra Nevada and that is 50 or 100 miles and more. No timber fit for fence; fencing [must be] by wire or ditching.

You ask if the statements in the Dubuque Tribune are true. I have answered part of the questions. I will say here that the assertion by the Cal. meeting at Washington that in 2 or 3 years Cal. will yield 300,000,000 dollars (three hundred millions) per annum is most unmitigated gas—mere humbug. No man in this state believes it. The resolutions of the Washington meeting were never, as far as I have seen, published in any Cal. paper. They were too gassy.

Thomas improves in writing. He must write often. He wishes to come and dig gold. Get him to digging a well or a cellar and he will then have some slight idea of the labor of gold digging. It is fun to talk of—but it is something else to do it. I do not complain, nor do I suffer greatly from the labor but it is not so easy or light as farm work.

Hereafter a Steamer Edition of the Sonora Herald will be published monthly. I think I will send you that, instead of the weekly paper. I may send you other papers. This letter must go to the p.o. tomorrow in order that it may go by the next steamer of June 1st or during the first week in June.

Keep in good spirit, all of you. Let the world go as it will, be cheerful, active and good-hearted. It does much to preserve health and happiness. Goodbye and God bless you all.

Your affectionate husband,

E. Booth

**May 26.**

It is just sunset—has been a hot day—the hottest we have had this spring and worse for us because we are in a deep place and cannot feel the wind. I am getting supper—the potatoes are boiling.

My room mate has gone to town, with one from each company on the creek for near a mile about town, to notify the mining companies in and near Sonora that they will no longer be allowed to turn the water of the creek into Sonora by races. These races run along the high bank of the creek and leak into our deep holes. A fight occurred two days ago near us between two men on this question.

The town miner prosecuted the creek miner for “assault and battery” and today it was decided against the town miner. The former had turned the water from the race owing to the leak. You asked if water can be obtained for use. It can even in the dry season by means of wells; but for gold washing we need running streams.

This afternoon we discovered the nest of a hummingbird in our hole—the hole is about 30 feet square and perpendicular on the bank side where it is 12 or 14 ft. deep. Some roots project from near the top. On one of these—not as large as your little finger and shaded by other & larger roots above, which are covered with earth—the bird built its nest during our late absence. It is hatching and we shall not disturb it. While it left its nest for a half hour I pulled myself up by the large roots, sat on the shoulders of another man, and saw two eggs of the size of the end of your little finger & less than half an inch long. The nest is the size of a half hen's egg. The inside is not larger than mother's thimble.

In front of our tent and the others is a garden with growing potatoes, beets, etc. The newspapers from below speak of new potatoes. At home you have but just planted them. I see flowers in large variety and by thousands every day, such as I never saw in the East.

I am now eating my supper—boiled potatoes, 10 cts. per pound; beef steaks (fresh every day), 18¢ pickles from Boston, in a glass jar holding a half gallon, 87 cts. the jar; bread, five loaves for 50¢, and we eat that amount daily; butter, \$1.00 per pound. Poor butter, that none but a Mexican can eat, can be had for 50¢. Dried apples, 20¢ per lb. We usually have ham at 25¢ and some other trifles. You see it costs something to live in the land of gold.

59

View of Sonora, California, in 1852. From a contemporary lithograph. It was here that Edmund Booth spent considerable time during the period when he was mining gold along streams in the foothills of the Sierra.

60

**Columbia, Calif. July 11, 1852.**

My dear Wife

As you see, I am now in the town of Columbia, five miles north of Sonora. It is Sunday morning and I have just come in from Yankee Hill, two miles east, in order to be able to mail or forward my letter.

You express regret that I did not say in my letter of Feb. when I am coming home. I do not exactly know myself—but one thing I know and that is that I am doing well—making from \$30 to \$90 per week. Last night we divided the profits of the week's work (of five days, Monday, 5th, being the 4th of July). My share was \$48.93 cts. We are three men in the Co. It has paid as high as \$90 a day—about ten days ago.

About four weeks ago I sold my share in Wood's Creek for \$100. and quit the concern. Purchased a share in what is called the Cabin Claim at Yankee Hill for \$130. We have ground enough for four months' work. The only danger is that the water will fail before the big ditch, to bring water from the Stanislaus, can be finished. We expect it will be ready in September.

I am glad Thomas has his Bancroft at last. He must take good care of the volumes. The work will not have its equal for near half a century.

I feel thankful for the Mandrake pills you sent me. Without them I could have little hope of curing any serious disease by which I might be attacked. I have again very recently proved their efficiency, having had a severe fit of sickness, having as a foundation a cold which I had entirely neglected for two months. One night when the day's work was over, I found myself out of health. Next day went to Sonora—grew worse—stayed there—obtained emetic, salts and senna, of a physician, or rather he administered them, as he lived in the same house and was an old acquaintance. Eat nothing for three days—and finally gave a Dutchman a dollar to go and bring my carpet bag from up Wood's Creek 1/2 mile, where I had left it in the house of some friends. From this I took six and next day seven Mandrake pills and the tide turned. I had become so weak as hardly to be able to walk, but from this time mended rapidly, and lo and behold! it came out that I had the smallpox!

This disease has prevailed for two months in and around Sonora, but I believe not over 20 or 30 persons have had it. Four have died of it. One of my late partners on Wood's Creek has it now very badly.

On the morning after I learned the nature of the disease, I entered the stage and came to Columbia. Thence I walked to Yankee Hill and set up housekeeping on my own account and have continued it since—having a week ago taken in a messmate who had lived long with me in Sonora—a short, sturdy, genial soul of a German.

I will just add to this long story that the nine days' idleness into which I was thrown cost me near a hundred dollars—in paying out for board, medicine, hired labor on my claim at \$5 per day, etc. I had but half a box of the pills left and, since receiving yours, I shall feel confidence. You need not fear on the subject. I use them only in severe cases and they are no more dangerous than arsenic, nightshade and henbane which the doctors use—in fact they are not dangerous at all.

I have forgotten to state that I have an interest in another claim at Yankee Hill but have stopped working it, owing to the failure of water. It is not so good as the one I am now working. The steel pens in universal use in Cal. often vex me—they rather scratch than write and quills are rarely seen.

And now I will speak of matters other than myself—the Emigration. I perceive in the Dubuque Express the probability of Col. Madeira and many others turning back from Council Bluffs, sick of the “fun and pleasure” of the long journey. If he kept on among the first trains, he did not suffer much for want of grass this side of the Rocky Mountains. The first trains have arrived at Sacramento and done very well. They had mules. Those who arrive in the latter part of summer & in autumn will suffer greatly in the loss of animals and wagons—but on reaching the forks of the road (Lawson's route) they will be supplied with provisions free of cost if destitute, and will be aided at various points until they arrive in the mines. The forks are about 80 miles up the Humboldt. Near that place is abundance of tall grass.

You say many in and near Anamosa contemplate removing to Cal. next spring. I would seriously advise them not to throw themselves into a whirlpool. If the Emigration next spring should be great, they would do wisely to keep out of it. If small or moderate they can get along easily enough. Let their coming depend on this one thing; the amount of the Emigration. Knowing the route as I do, nothing under the Sun would induce me to bring you and the children in such a crowd, not even if I had forty teams.

In a very few years the route will be well protected by the govt. Men will have settled in the Bear River Valley and other places. Provisions and assistance can then be obtained when needed. The emigration each year will be not more than can well get through and little loss and suffering will ensue. Besides these land titles will be settled, and land will be no higher than next fall when 50,000 persons are after farms all at once.

**To Mary Ann Booth July, 1852.**

No. 2d. I passed the 4th (5th) of July in Columbia. I will you an account of it in the Sonora Herald and therefore will say nothing of it here, save that it was a spirited affair and that the miners with their wheelbarrow and long tom (an impromptu part got up by themselves) entered into it with such ardor as nearly to turn the whole thing, unintentionally of course, into a burlesque. I saw the big grizzly bear, "Gen. Scott," in his cage but did not attend any of his fights with bulls.

You will, before you receive this, have seen an account of the destruction of Sonora by fire. I was at the time at Yankee Hill and did not know of it till next day.

One of my partners at the Hill, after a drinking bout of a week, went to Sonora, where he followed the same course for three weeks and then in a fit of deliriumtremens cut his throat with a razor—dead of course. He was from Arkansas—originally from Canada and educated at King's College, New Brunswick—was a lawyer. This suicide happened week before last.

You can do as you please about selling cattle. I think you sell the bull calf and also the cow next fall. It will save you the trouble of taking care of them, and it [is] not probable that the price of

cows will go up with the price of land. We can get as good next spring and at the price we sell and without the useless trouble and expense of winter keeping.

I will sell all the town lots & house in Fairview. I think I will send a power of attorney to Mr. Skinner. Whether it will answer I am not certain as it would not be signed by you and your acknowledgment taken by the same officer. I will have to go to Sonora for the purpose of perfecting it and having the seal of the county court attached. I do not remember clearly the numbers nor Block in which they are situated. I leave you to fix the price but certainly they are worth more than fifty dollars.

It wants but the railroad in operation to double the value of all real estate within 20 miles of it. Men will then prefer staying on their farms to going farther west and those who wish to buy must give a higher price to get them out.

Today for the first time since I crossed the summit of the Sierra I have had a taste of ice. It was on the butter at dinner. It is brought from the higher regions eastward and sells here at 20 cents per lb. Everything in Cal. goes by the pound, never by the bushel. I have never seen a half bushel measure, since quitting Iowa.

I will try to finish my letter. Let me say to our friends at home who have the Cal. fever to give up the notion of coming simply to make a fortune in the mines. It is slow and uncertain work, the best parts worked out on claims. The newspapers here publish only such accounts as are favorable and miners feel none of the excitement on reading them which is felt at the East. The fact is our knowledge is hard earned and we don't believe a tenth of what we read. When the Sonora Herald says the miners are doing well, deduct 50 per cent and you will be nearer the truth. It has an object in getting miners to come in from the north.

62

To those who contemplate coming for permanent settlement with their families, I would say wait a few years. It can be no loss. Matters will settle down into quietness here, and then they will find something in accordance with their usual habits instead of the wild, restless spirit of a fierce and



uneasy speculation now universal. Being western people they ought to know what it is to settle a new country. The men are apt to like it well enough, but it is hard on the women and children. And further it will require but a short time for some enterprising persons to establish regular lines of conveyance with relays of mules & horses at various points by which families can be expressed through in two months and thereby the tiresome journey of five and six months with its attendant losses saved.

The time of going home will depend much on the water I have here. I do expect to go next winter. Dont despair. I never allow downheartedness in myself.

I hope you have rented the field. Shall expect another letter from you soon. Goodbye. Love to the children—to mother and all.

Your affectionate

Edmund.

**Columbia, Tuolumne Co., California Aug. 8th, 1852**

Dear Mary Ann

It is Sunday, and I and my messmate have come into Columbia from “Yankee Hill” to procure some thirty pounds of potatoes and other articles of provisions for the coming week's consumption. We eat 30 lb. of potatoes in a week, 10 cents per lb. (or \$6.00 per bushel!); 5 loaves or rolls of baker's bread daily at 10 cts. per roll; 2 to 3 lb. fresh beef, 16 to 18 cts. per lb. A jar of mixed pickles, \$1.00, and 2 to 3 lb. butter, 85 cts. per lb., per week and some few other articles. I keep an account of all these expences, and on Saturday night we settle up and each pays his share. The amount varies from five to six dollars per man per week. You see that living here is a little more expensive than at home.

In the past seven weeks I have received as dividends from the claim we work—"Cabin Claim," so called—\$258.00 and should have more than fifty additional had not the small pox attack thrown me out out and compelled me to put on a man at \$5.00 per day.

Of the small pox, no sign remains, and I expect to carry home the same handsome phiz I brought away. I made use, when the pustules appeared, of the cold water system and thus "saved my skin."

I live in a log house 10 x 12 feet, with double canvas roof, this keeping out the sun's heat in summer and the rain in winter. It has a fireplace and chimney—is my own house—was given to me in payment of a debt by my late partner, who cut his throat while drunk.

You speak of Clough's losing, etc., by gambling. I have known many such cases—but I never gamble, having seen enough to know that where one succeeds, ten lose. One of my partners last summer lost two hundred in a night—all he had.

You see, in a paper I sent Danforth a week ago, persons have been killed while at work by earth falling in on them. I have been in such dangerous places but am not now. We dig only from two to five feet deep and we are at the bottom. I have ground enough in the "Cabin Claim" for two month's work or more, and as yet our water has not failed. We are vexed sometimes because too little comes but we dont grumble much. We pay two dollars per day for water for our tom—all others four dollars per day. We have it at half price because the former owners of the clam owned a spring at the head of the gulch which they sold to the Big Ditch Co., with the condition, etc. The water from "Five Mile Creek" (see Sonora Herald of July 31st) may fail, but we expect the Big Ditch to be completed this month. After that, no more failures of water are expected. If then the claim continues good, I shall do well. Last week my dividend was \$40.50¢ and our claim has ever been held to be one of the best, has paid sometimes as high as \$90. to the hand per week. At the next one below us, four men took out yesterday a pound and a half of gold. It was not thought worth digging, and one of them 63 had just sold out for two ounces. Such are the uncertainties of gold mining. I stop now for dinner.

Have dined well for a dollar, the usual price except in Sonora where it is 75¢. Had what is rare with me, garden vegetables, such as cucumbers, squash, green corn, tomatoes, etc. Gardens are more plenty than last year, but not enough and never will be extensive in the mountains for the reason that the soil except on the low flats is anything but fertile. Water & musk melons are very plenty—price five times and upward what they are at home.

I am glad you have found out the value of the Mandrakes. It is now stated in the public papers that the cholera is in the northern mines. I do not fear it. I have Mandrakes and if need be can take 44 in five hours as on the plains in 1849. A much less number will answer. No. 6—or hot drops—is sold at a druggist's in this place and a half pint or a pint is sufficient.

I hope this disease will not reach Anamosa. As it seems to come into the valley of the Mississippi every year, you ought to have on hand the proper medicines (as above) and use them promptly. The quarrelling of the doctors shows plainly enough they understand nothing of it. It does not commence with sickness as in other cases, but commences in death. A person attacked begins to die outright—sometimes this dying continues several hours—you must then use medicines, not as the stupid doctors do, to stupefy, but to rouse the stomach and nerves to action to throw off the disease. A large dose of No. 6 will rouse the powers of life and the Mandrakes (in large doses) will clear the stomach very quickly. In small doses they will not work till next day. In cholera they must work immediately. I write from experience and that in such critical matters is worth ten thousand speculative theories.

My paper is sadly blotted, and spoiled also by putting it in my hat when I went to dinner and then about town.

I should rejoice to be at home in the new house in a nice warm parlour next winter. At present I am in uncertainty about the time I return and you are right to put in a good stock of patience and wait calmly.\*

Unsigned.

**Yankee Hill, Tuolumne Co., Cal. Aug. 26th, 1852**

Dear Mary Ann

I write now because I have nothing else to do, and this doing nothing is the hardest work. As you see above, I am now at Yankee Hill, where I have been during the past ten weeks except an occasional Sunday at Sonora or Columbia. For three weeks I have made nothing owing to the want of water. They are caulking the floom and aqueducts which have been empty and drying all summer. One of the directors of the canal company was here yesterday and told us we shall have water next Monday or Wednesday. We have been promised so often that we say we will believe it when we see it, but I have no doubt it will come next week. It is now Thursday.

The name of this place derives from the discoverer of the diggings in '49. Named Hills, and, being a Yankee, it sounded so much like the comic actor that the name fell on the place.

On all sides and in all shapes arise mountains. They are on fire in various places, and at night I see on the East a long, irregular line of fire extending from base to summit while, far beyond and unseen from our sunken position in the valleys, the Sierra rears still further upward. The mountains around are thinly covered with pine, live and white oaks.

The eastern papers complain of the mercury at 90° in the shade. We have had it over 100° here many times, and in the sun it must be at 140°, for a rent on my shoulder let in the sun one day and at night I found it completely blistered. Also when [I was] living on bacon (or ham) my shirt was completely encrusted with salt and stiff as if starched. And yet it appears to me that we do not feel the heat much more here than in the East. Here I perspire much more freely than at home—I give my head an occasional shake, and the sweat falls like rain.

I wish and have often wished that I was good at etching that I might send you pictures of the wild and rough scenery of the various places where I work or have worked.

I have just sold a claim here (not my best one) for one hundred dollars. It was the one I worked last May—sold to some friends from Sonora. Very little work is doing here now. Most of the miners are reading, rambling and devising other ways to kill time. We have a boarding house (frame) and another frame, also a frame butcher's stand and a log blacksmith shop are building, and, when the water comes, it will be a busy place. I board myself yet, living in a pine log cabin, five logs high, covered by a double roof of canvas—the door but four feet high, through which I dodge in and out head foremost. The door itself is canvas pendant like a curtain. An ox looking for salt, etc., pushed through a few days since and devoured all my potatoes, onions & bread and, after knocking over and scattering everything else, left me minus the value of twenty bushels of corn (at 25¢ per bu.) at home. Wouldn't it kill him?

I forgot to state that we work occasionally in stripping in order to be ready. The worst stripping (throwing off the top dirt which contains little or no gold) is over—and, owing to the absence of water, we work leisurely, having abundance of time on our hands. Since the water stopped we have worked less than half the time, and I assure you it is hard work to be idle, whatever indolent people may say. Yesterday I slept through nearly the whole afternoon and, as a consequence, read (being unable to sleep) till daylight this morning and was up before the sun. I believe the climate of the whole Pacific Coast has a tendency to make idlers sleep in the middle of the day during summer.

You will see, by the papers, in some measure how the emigration comes in. There is much suffering, as was the case in 1850, but probably not so badly, as the Humboldt did not overflow this summer, and the relief train aids many. Still the \$25,000 appropriated by the legislature is not enough and private subscriptions throughout the state will probably be made to help those who are coming. Sick and almost starving people are picked up by the relief train—and many suffer badly before they reach it. Our Cal. papers do not tell—you will see (probably) much worse accounts in the Eastern [papers] by letter from the Emigrants.

And, speaking of newspapers, the Sonora Herald has been striving in Baron Munchausen fashion of late to bring some of this crowd of Emigrants into Tuolumne County from the north where they enter the State.

I have a copy of the “Sonora Mountain Whig” which I will send you next Sunday, when I expect to go to Sonora, if not the day before. You will see that Sonora & vicinity support two papers—cannot Anamosa and the country around support one? As we have no post office nearer than Sonora, I do not send papers every week as formerly. You will understand this—the mining population is too shifting in its character for a p.o. to support itself except in the large towns where letters can readily be obtained by express. So, wherever I am, you must always direct to Sonora.

My health, spirits, prospects and hopes are good—was never in better health in my life. Decidedly Cal. is a very healthy country; and when the railroad is built will be as much a resort for invalids as Italy and Cuba. During the whole of my residence I have known but three cases of fever & ague in the state. The smallpox still prevails to a limited extent around, as I judge from a meeting being called in Columbia Sunday before last to consider measures to suppress it, but I cannot by inquiry hear of any cases. Our papers do not mention it lest it frighten the northern miners.

You must read in the Sonora Herald in regard to the disposal of the mineral lands—it is the effort of the speculators, traders & gamblers chiefly and has hardly any support from real miners. Our own laws suit us better than any congress can or will make—they know nothing about the business.

65

Now I have filled a sheet and will stop. It has whiled away a morning and there is no greater pleasure than talking with home.

Look carefully in this.

**Sonora, Cal. Sept. 12, '52.**

No. 2d.

It is Sunday and I am in Sonora. Have just looked into the post office for letters leaving N. York Aug. 5th. Found nothing, and will send this one. On the Monday after writing the first part of this letter, the water from the Stanislaus (see Frémont's map, at Skinner's or Dr. Sales') began to pour from the "Big Ditch" into and down "Shot Gulch" in which my claim lies. We went to work—three in number—and at the end of the week we had \$60.12 1/2 to the man. The second week (last week) \$34.44 per man. This week we shall doubtless do better. It will be good for two months yet and may for three. I will stick to it as long as it pays well.

Two weeks ago I sent you views of Sonora and Columbia. These were from Daguerreotypes and therefore correct. Ask old Joslin to explain them. Metcalf can do it well if he is at home. Today I send you two papers. In the "Whig" you will notice a marked passage in regards to the women & children crossing the deserts. In the Herald a letter home. This letter is truthful—nothing new to me but curious out east. I have plenty of water for washing gold, but very many are again disappointed and are waiting for rain as they have been waiting for 2 or 3 months past. Tedious to them.

I will put a gold dollar in this for Thomas for his biggest melon as I promised. As it is the only one of the kind I have, and they are rarely seen here, I hope he will share it with Harriet. If I could find another I would send it. I thought I would send you a ten or twenty gold piece but fear its weight will cause its loss. If you wish money, I will at once send a draft. I keep my gold in the iron safe of "Yancy & Bertine," Bankers in Sonora. You see their names in the advertisements in the Sonora papers. Bertine is post master and has long been a friend of mine.

I see that Iowa has gone Democratic. Hope they will have more sense in Nov. than to go for a man who has ever gone dead against all western improvements.

The weather begins to moderate, but still it is very warm and fleas plenty as ever. Every night I fight them till I am asleep. They will disappear after the first rain and come again as soon as the rainy season is over.

I wish you would keep the “views” of Sonora and Columbia. Hang them against the wall in your bedroom or in Thomas' and a cloth over to prevent their growing black with dust, etc.

I shall return to Yankee Hill towards sunset and work away as usual. My love to all. Write—you & Thomas.

Goodbye,

Edmund.

**Sonora, Cal. Sept. 26th, 1852**

Dear Mary Ann

Enclosed is a draft on Adams & Co., by a Branch of their house here, for \$25.00. It is a small sum but will go far at home. I send it that you may provide well for the winter and make everything comfortable. It is Sunday and I came down from Yankee Hill in hopes of a letter from home but find nothing. Your last letter was written in May. It is now September and I have no news from home for over three months.

By Steamer of the first, I sent you views of Sonora and Columbia. By the 15th sent a letter containing a dollar for Thomas for his biggest melon. This year melons, apples, and pears are very abundant in the Sonora market and at one-half or one-third last year's prices. The town has grown up again since the fire—better and handsomer than before—and is at the moment crowded with some thousands of miners on business or pleasure.

66

At Yankee Hill my share of the profits last week was about \$22.00....

I hope you will make yourselves snug and comfortable for the winter. Write immediately. My love to all.



Goodbye,

Edmund.

**Dubuque Nov. 9th, 1852**

My dear Husband

You will be surprised to see that we are here. Emily wrote that she and her husband thought how lonely it was for me to stay at home and keep house without any man to help me this cold winter to get my wood and provisions. So I thought that we should better come to live with them, because I was afraid that Thomas would not be able to work out this cold winter, but if you are coming back this time, we shall return home immediately. Dont you like to have us come in and live with Mr. Fifield [husband of her sister Emily] who is a fine man, he is frank and intelligent. He now can talk with me with his fingers. Thomas can learn to talk with them and they can correct his rough manners and his talks. Harrison can teach him in his office sometimes and it will not cost me anything for his schooling.

I am glad that you have a plenty of water to wash dirty dust. I still hope that you will have a good fortune and that you will return home safely. I must urge you to be careful not to tell anybody that you are going to start for home with so much money with you, for I am afraid that they may be cunning to follow and kill you on the way and rob your money. I never tell anybody about your money, for I am in danger if I live in my house alone, with so many dollars in the drawers. I should be murdered and robbed.

I am very sorry that an ox devoured your provisions in your house.

If you do not come home, what shall I do with our farm? I have been thinking that I should better let our farm rent free for a year to pay in splitting new rails and repairing the fence. I can not sell our lots in Fairview without signing your name. Mr. Starkweather offered me 30 dollars for three

lots not in money, but in trade. I would not like it, for it is too cheap. I know that our lots are worth fifty dollars.

You must be careful not to overwork so hard. I hope that I shall see you soon and [you will] live with us in our new house comfortably and I shall not part with you again. I hope that God will take care of you while you are on the way for home.

Your affectionate wife,

Mary Ann Booth.

**Columbia, California January 8, '53**

Dear Mary Ann

I write this that you and mother may not be alarmed for me in the present crisis of California affairs. I have mailed papers for you and was about starting for Yankee Hill when I noticed men putting up placards giving notice of a meeting to be held tomorrow by the miners around, for the purpose of taking some steps to secure their claims until April, they intending to go and pass the winter in Stockton and San Francisco owing to the scarcity and high price of provisions in the mines. I am in no danger of starving, if only provisions are to be had at some price.

It is Saturday afternoon. Since the first of Dec. I have little more than made expenses. This is owing to bad weather and high price of provisions, and they threaten to go higher. I have enough for a week to come and my claim pays well when the sky will let us work. This week we washed two and a half days, and took out (4 men) \$76. It costs me now to live eight to ten dollars per week, boarding myself. Cannot get bread at any price, nor meat either, and yet I feel nothing frightened, for such weather cannot be expected to continue. I am off for Yankee Hill. Goodbye and God bless you all.

Edmund.

**Columbia, Cal. Jan. 10, 1853.**

Dear Mary Ann

I wrote you last Saturday and yesterday went to Sonora in hopes of a letter from you but the mail had not come. So procured a couple of hams, 22 lbs. at 50¢ per lb., \$11.00, and a salmon, 8 lb. at 37¢ per lb. I returned to Yankee Hill.

This morning, when at work, one of my partners informed me he saw my name on a list of letters at the Bookstore in Columbia. I ate what is called dinner and came in here and found yours of Nov. 9—written at Dubuque. Well, I believe it is all well that you are at Dubuque with Emily, and better for the children. I have been a good deal anxious on their account owing to the bad language so prevalent in country life.

Stay if you like and enjoy yourselves and if possible let Thomas attend a better school than they have at Anamosa. You must not suppose, as your letter indicated, that I am growing rich. Very few do that here. Perhaps one in a thousand. Still I am doing very well, or rather I should be doing well if the rain would but cease and let us work more than one or two days in the week.

Looking over my books last night, I find that in the past four weeks I have spent over \$40 for provisions alone. The hams, however, will serve for three or four weeks. In Columbia pork is a dollar a pound and little at that. In Sonora, potatoes 30 cents per lb. or \$18.00 the bushel At present most merchants are standing almost idle, because they have little or nothing to sell.

An old friend called on me from Sonora this morning and wished to borrow money at 4 per cent a month to invest in sheep at San Diego. Driving them here to sell to the butchers. I declined. California speculations are often something of the wildest.

You refer to the ox devouring my provisions. It happened three times for it was not till a Sunday that I could stop to fix a door. Should the farm be allowed to lie as it is, it will be richer when I return. I shall then wish to sell or rent it, as it is too far from Anamosa for convenient working.

Affectionately,

E. Booth

As soon as wild flowers appear, in 2 or 4 weeks, I will send you some.

**Sonora, Cal. April 10th, '53**

Dear Mary Ann

Your welcome letter of Feb. 10th reached me last Sunday (3d) and I waited till today to answer it because no steamer would leave San F—till the 15th. In this I enclose a draft on Adams & Co., N. Y., for sixty dollars. In two weeks I will send another for thirty if rain does not stop my operations. I send all I have in my pocket. I have more in Bank (Yancy & Bertine's), but dont like to draw out so small a sum. I hope you will pay all debts, and get the land near the house at Anamosa broken, so that it will be ready to cultivate next spring. I shall be at home next winter to prepare the fence.

During last Dec., Jan. & Feb. I sometimes made out well, but, owing to rainy weather—it was the worst we ever had—I made out, on the whole, badly. What I now send you I got out in the past four weeks, clear of all expense for water & boarding. The rainy season is nearly over. April is the last month, and we are well supplied by canals from both the Tuolumne and the Stanislaus.

You must have patience. My expectations of last winter failed but I am doing well now. You are happier than I am, as you have the children with you and I am alone. Keep your head or hands or both busy. Work or read as you please, and time will not appear so long.

I eat breakfast by candlelight in the morning and am at work before sunrise. Work till noon—dinner and rest an hour—and then work till sunset, and this work is 68 of the hardest kind. It wears

a man out; and nevertheless I weigh two hundred and five pounds. I have never yet seen a man that thought of making mining a life employment—all are disgusted with it owing to its being so severe and so uncertain.

I read “Uncle Tom's Cabin” some months since and am glad you and Thomas have it. I have been in the South and know that it is not a whit exaggerated.

Since the reduction of the 40 cent letter postage, Charley C. has in every instance charged illegal postage on letters and papers, mailed at Anamosa for me. By the law reducing this postage, letters to & from Cal. prepaid are five cents, not paid ten cents. He charges six cents prepaid. Legal postage on newspapers, five cents. He takes four cents, thus balancing one blunder by another. I never thought it worth mentioning. But by the law passed last August, California postage is brought to the same level as that in, to and from all the other States, namely, half a cent if prepaid, one cent if not.

Charley is not so dull but that he can read the law and, if he cannot understand it, why then the people of Anamosa should memorialize the legislature of Iowa for an appropriation to send him to some insane hospital. You need pay no more than a half cent on any paper you send me. If Charley demands more don't pay, but send it on and if he marks it eight cents I shall have it for one from the Sonora p.o. The clerk in the p.o. here laughed when he handed me the “Anamosa News” prepaid, being just eight times the legal amount.

I am much obliged to the Editor for that number of the paper. He should have sent it from the beginning. Do send it along. I want it all the time. You do not know that staying away from home so long is almost death. Send me papers frequently or tell the Editor to send regularly. Thomas can attend to this matter.

Get the alarm clock if you wish; and keep plenty of provisions in the house. You will see by the Sonora paper I send that we are to have a weekly mail to & from the East. The weather is growing warm and fleas are coming out as usual in millions.

It is Sunday. I will close now and write again in two weeks. My love to all,

Goodbye,

Affectionately,

Edmund Booth.

**[Letter to Thomas] Sonora, Cal. Saturday Evening Apr. 16, 1853**

My dear boy

Although I date from Sonora, I am still at the “diggings” some miles from that city.

Tomorrow, I send you a Chinese book, and also another book entitled “Crayon Sketches” of men who have made themselves; who are distinguished as public speakers and writers; and who mostly speak and write for the present and the future, not, as do most of our politicians, for the past. The work is racy and lifelike.

Among the characters hit off, you will find Horace Greeley, whose paper, the New York Tribune, will probably reach you with this or soon after. It appears that the money [\$4 for two years' subscription] I sent for it last Autumn was lost. I will send again for it tomorrow.

I hope you will read that paper habitually—not merely the news, but also the reviews of books, sketches and lectures, etc. It is important that you should acquire a knowledge not only of words and ability to use them, but also of ideas—a large range of facts and ideas. These are to be learned not all in a day or in a year, but as a bee gathers honey, little by little.

The Tribune has several editors. The leading editor is Greeley. The other editors are George Ripley—for fifteen years a Unitarian clergyman of a church in Boston, and Charles A. Dana. The two last were editors of the “Harbinger,” to which I was a subscriber from its first starting till its death. It was too far in advance of the age to 69 live over three good years. Another editor of the Tribune is

Bayard Taylor, who wrote the Jenny Lind prize poem—a poet, an enthusiast, now traveling in Asia, whence he writes home letters which are published in the Tribune. I hope you will read them with the map before you. He proposed to pass through China and penetrate, if possible, into the, for two hundred years past, impenetrable kingdom of Japan.

Do not suffer the loss of the “Sketches.” It will bear more than one reading, and the men described in the work are, with one or two exceptions, living men in middle life. The lady (Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe), who wrote “Uncle Tom's Cabin,” is a sister to the two Beechers of the “Sketches.” Genius, united with Conscientiousness and Humanity, runs in that family. Among others, you have also Theo. Parker—“wrong in theory, right in practice”—Hale, Seward, Sumner, John Van Buren—or “Prince John” who may yet be President of “Young America.” Then there is the keen, spicy editor Wright of the “Boston Commonwealth,” Emerson, Wendell Phillips, etc.

Be a good boy, as your mother says you are, and I am glad of it. Write me and try to write as well as you can.\*

Unsigned.

**Sonora, Sunday, April 24, 1853**

Dear Mary Ann

I have enclosed a dollar for the N. Y. Tribune for Thomas—thus (if it should not be lost as before) he will have the best, most honest, sensible and practical paper in America, and in the “Sketches” he will discover some real, live men; not wooden heads, but men who have hearts and souls as big as their bodies, united to large intellect.

I hope you will pay all the debts. In a short time I will send you more [money], but you must in return send me the Anamosa News. Dont pay postage on it.

With love,

E. Booth

**Anamosa, July 22, 1853**

My dear husband

Last Tuesday morning I received your interesting letter of June 12. I quickly sat down to open and read it and most cried, for I overjoyed to hear that you said that you would be at home next winter. I wish that you will start for home early in the fall and be home before Christmas or New Year's, so I may make you feast here.

Our field is improving very well and there are crops in it looking very nice and rich—you will have a nice farm next year....

Then Harrison and myself went down to Joslin's to settle with Harrison who found his own timber and split and hauled seven hundred and forty-five rails to our farm. All of them cost eighteen dollars and sixty-two cents and I paid him all very well. I did pay all debts clearly. Now about the same time I bought some provisions, enough for all summer. My money about twenty dollars are left in my own pocket. I must be careful to save these money to buy hay for our young two cattle for next winter—here one ton of hay sells at two dollars; and also buy some lumber more for our kitchen (for siding and lathing). I think best that you will not send me any more because you will be at home soon.

Behold, my writing looks very bad, because my pen is dull. I wish you will buy a real golden pen when you are on your way home, so it will be kept good for many years. I hope that you will wear better dresses when you return home. You must throw your mining dresses away! or sell them to the miners.

Our potatoes and crops and vegetables look better than last summer. Thomas justly came from hoeing the weed among the potatoes to rest a little while, so he reading now papers. New York Tribune comes here regularly—we like it well.



Emily told me that Mr. Fifield was talking of buying Mr. Woods' paper in Dubuque. Mr. F. offered Mr. W. \$3,000, but he has not enough to buy it, he is waiting for George to return home to help F. I have justly ate supper and washed my dishes and took my pen again to finish this tonight I hope that you will be contented to live in Anamosa, because there is a newspaper. Our children send their love to you.

Yours much affectionate,

Mary Ann.

P.S. I shall look for you in the stage which is passing and repassing by our house daily.

**Sonora, Cal. Sept. 29th, 1853.**

Dear Mary Ann

I wrote you a few days ago and the letter has gone, but, being in Sonora and having nothing to do this morning, I will write again, especially as I yesterday rec'd two papers from you and Julia which interested me intensely as containing the result of the railroad voting. It is curious to observe how the townships off and on the line went. Unlike the office seekers, the offs or outs fought shy. When the road is built, they will be rather shy of admitting that they voted against it, and it will be rich then to poke fun at them.

In my last, I stated that I was on the point of starting on a look-around tour with my partner & dog. We started when nearly noon and arrived at Murphy's camp before sunset. In the evening found a friend who at once invited me to stay in his house, and from him I gathered all the information I wished. He was a cordial, good-hearted friend whom I have known for years. Next day we traveled through Douglass Flat, Vallecitta, Angels' Camp, Cearson's, French Camp, etc. Excepting Murphy's & Vallecitta, there were few miners. Murphy's alone had water brought from the Stanislaus, but the supply limited.

While traveling from Vallecitta to French Camp, Florent, who was some distance from me, took the wrong track. The dog accompanied him, but, after walking some time, the dog's strange manner led him to think there was some mistake &, meeting two men on horseback, he asked if I had passed. The answer being in the negative, he turned back and entered the right track. The dog was then satisfied, and ran along the path, smelling and raising his head up to look. F—followed and so they kept on for three miles when they came to a house in which I was waiting. It is wild country, and the trip was a hard one. My bones are still aching.

My funds I keep at Yancy & Bertine's Banking House in Sonora, but on starting for home shall procure drafts on Adams & Co. It is the safest way. Should accidents happen any transactions of mine will be on their books in New York—I have no fears, however, of accidents.

An accident by steamer or railroad overtakes one in many thousands and it is nearly as reasonable to expect to be struck by lightning. But if railroad directors do not show more regard for human life than they have done of late, we will, when our R.R. is completed, tie some of our directors to the top of the engine, and thus the real culprits will be smashed, if anybody.

With this I send you the “Columbia Gazette.” You will see that it corroborated my statement of the dullness of mining matters from want of water. It is the most truth-telling paper in the mountains and as such is a marvel. If instead of hundreds of miners being idle, it would say thousands, it would be still more truthful. But enough of this matter. The rainy season will commence two or three weeks before you receive this letter, and every man will be at work. It is too late to send by the steamer of 1st Oct. and I am off to Camp Seco. Goodbye, love to all.

Affectionately,

E. Booth

71

## CHAPTER 5

## RETURN TO HIS IOWA HOME, AND HIS FINAL YEARS

Returning to Booth's autobiographical notes:

“In January or February [1854] a letter came from wife urging me to return home. It was very urgent and I concluded to return and no further delay. I was then working a good place at Camp Seco. As partner I had a deaf-mute young man named Herbert Weyhl, a German or Frenchman, I never could determine which, and thought he did not know himself. He was wholly uneducated but a smart fellow and a good worker. He came to California from New York. I could not induce him to enter the N. Y. school on his return. He was ashamed of his age, being over thirty.

“The ground we were working was paying well. That is, we would spend a day in stripping off the top of say four feet wide, six feet long and three or five feet deep. Next day turn the water from the ditch into our long tom and dig and throw in the lower dirt till we reached rock, perhaps two feet. Took out \$10 to \$30 each day we washed the dirt....

“But, being anxious to return home, I proceeded to San Francisco by stage and steamer. I waited, with friends, a few days till the steamer sailed. We were twelve days at sea and reached port in due time. Crossed over to Virgin Bay in Lake Nicaragua on mule back. We were in all 500 passengers. Took two steamers to foot of lake and there changed to two stern-wheelers and entered the San Juan River and thence to its mouth on the Atlantic. Saw tropical vegetation and many curiosities on the way.

“We reached the fort on the Atlantic side of the continent without any accident. Waited some hours. A large boat took us to a vessel for New Orleans, and another did the same for those bound for New York. We headed north and the other northeast and [it] was in sight for some hours. It was a side-wheel steamer....In the evening the pilot pointed out the light on the lighthouse at the western extremity of the island of Cuba. Another night came. The gale abated and I saw a sailor at the mast-head speaking to the pilot below. The latter turned the ship northwestward and soon I saw the lights in the north. We were now steering for the mouth of the Mississippi, yet a long way off, and I went

to my bunk. In the morning found we were steaming up the big river. It was on this voyage up the river that I got lots of newspapers showing new strife between North and South.

“On the voyage, as in California, people readily made acquaintance and friends. Good nature prevailed. We were all going home. Reaching New Orleans, the crowds scattered. Next day some who were bound north walked along the long line of river steamers and consulted newspaper advertisements for [the] date of departure for St. Louis. Found one [steamer] advertised to leave at two o'clock, afternoon, and engaged passage, paying twenty dollars for stateroom, board and passage. Was on board at the time but did not leave. Afternoon papers advertised it would sail next morning at nine o'clock. Then next morning papers said two o'clock p.m. and so it continued for three days. The object probably of promises and delay was to procure more passengers and freight. Finally when we [had] lost all faith in promises in the papers, the boat drew out and started up stream.

“It was a pleasant trip. When some distance below St. Louis, the boat grounded, being too heavily loaded for the state of the water. A passenger boat, a mile below and following us, was signaled and came alongside, took off such as wished at four dollars a head. I went with them for there was no knowing when the water would rise or the boat be got off by lightening cargo. I reached St. Louis, and here I wished I had stayed in California another month. The river above was closed by ice and only one steamer was advertised to try to break through the next day for Davenport, Iowa. It was in the closing days of February.

72

“I took passage on that one steamer. It was easy enough for the first few miles. After that it was rushing the boat and cutting away some rods, backing out and rushing in again, until about three or four miles below Keokuk, Iowa. There the contest was given up and we came to land. A dozen of us went ashore, kindled a fire for comfort while two men went inland on the hunt for a team to take the party forward to town. This came after some time and we all packed into the two-horse wagon and reached Keokuk and the hotel in the course of the night. Next day took conveyance to Burlington and thence by stagecoach for Iowa City. Next morning, I took stage for Anamosa via

Cedar Rapids, then a small straggling village. This time sat outside with the driver, wishing to get a good view of the country while approaching home.”

(Begun when Edmund Booth was 75, the autobiography was not completed until he was in his 88th year, when he added a few closing paragraphs, telling of his life of loneliness in Anamosa after the death of Mary Ann.)

In later years, Thomas Eyre Booth, the elder son, wrote his reminiscences of his own early life, and included the following account of his father's return from California:

“Our woodpile was in front of the house, as was customary, and late in the afternoon, I, a lad of twelve, was sitting on a log, gazing westward down the street....There were only occasional footmen [men on foot] or teams on the highway then. But finally, away down the street perhaps a quarter of a mile distant, I saw a traveller approaching. As he came nearer I observed that he was carrying a carpet sack in one hand. Surely it wasn't anybody I was acquainted with in this locality. This intensified my curiosity, and when the big man came straight toward me, put out his hand and exclaimed “Home at last!” I knew it was father! I verily believe I was the happiest boy in America at that moment.

“He scarcely stopped an instant, but started around the east side of the house without asking any questions, I tagging pretty close at his heels, and I turned the corner just in time to see mother fly out of the back door and throw her arms around his neck and kiss him.

“Hattie [Harriet] in later years, said that she and mother saw a strange man pass the east window and that she felt terribly scandalized when mother's strange performance met her wondering gaze!....But mother knew!”

Edmund Booth returned to his home in Anamosa, Iowa, in March, 1854, bringing with him a considerable sum of money gained in the California gold fields. In later years he was largely instrumental in inducing the Iowa legislature to provide for sending deaf children to the Illinois School for the Deaf, and at a later period to take the initial steps for the founding of the Iowa

State School for the Deaf. In 1880 the National Deaf-Mute College (now Gallaudet College), of Washington, D.C., awarded him the honorary degree of Master of Arts, in recognition of his “high attainments as a scholar and as a journalist.”

On July 7, 1855, a son, Frank Walworth Booth, was born to Edmund Booth and his wife. This son's career was devoted to teaching the deaf, although he himself, like his brother and sister, had normal speech and hearing.

About the year 1856 Edmund Booth became editor of the Anamosa Eureka, making it a strongly abolitionist paper during the period before the outbreak of the War Between the States. He bought the paper in 1858, and took his son Thomas in with him to operate it. He did no more farming. In 1895, he retired from active work, and his son Thomas took over the full operation of the newspaper. Mrs. Booth died in 1898.

Edmund Booth died at his home in Anamosa, Iowa, in 1905, largely, it is thought, from grief and loneliness after his wife's passing. He was 94.

Did not his life richly reflect and symbolize the energy, courage, initiative and vigor of the young American nation of the Nineteenth Century?

THE END